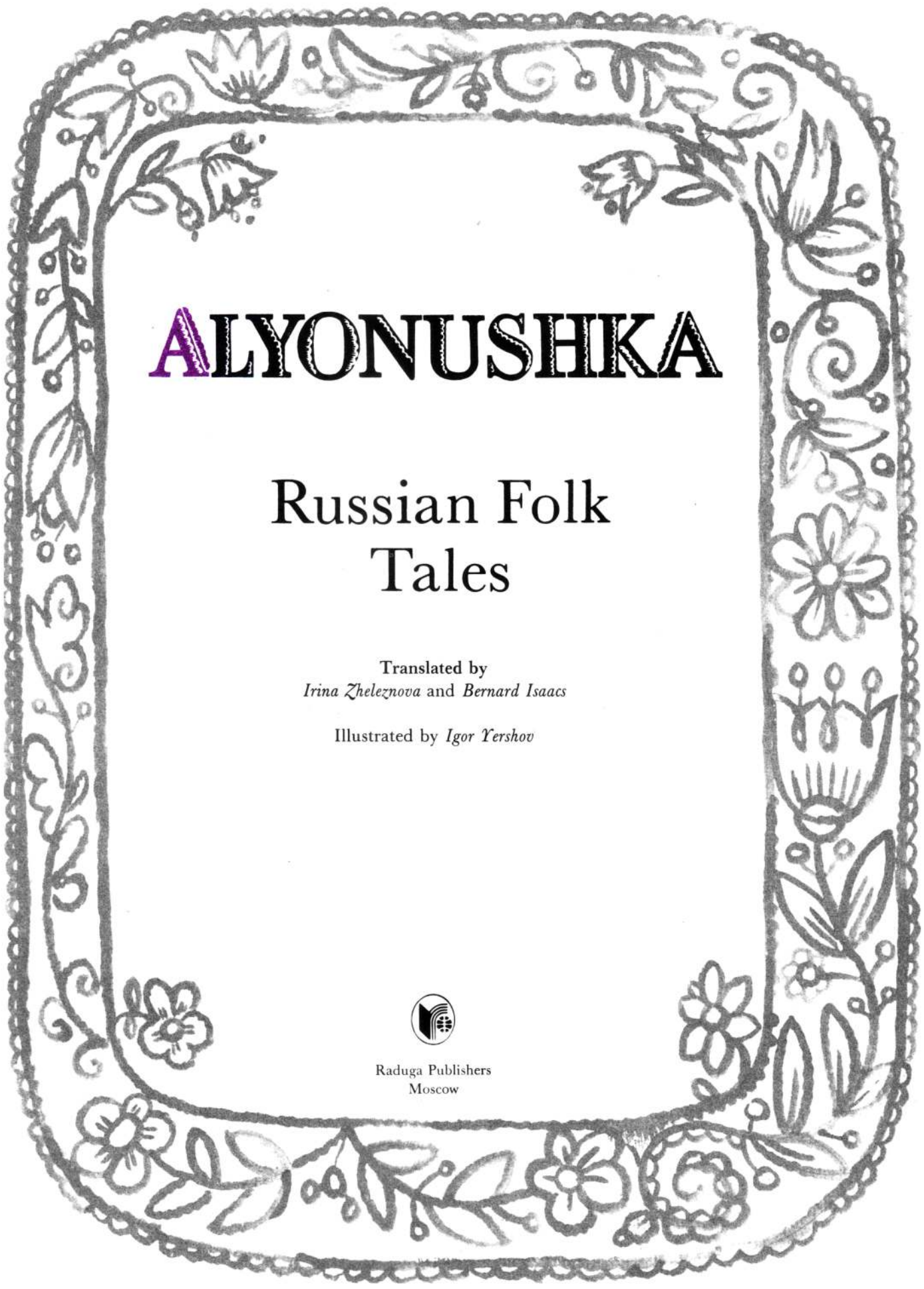




ALYONUSHKA



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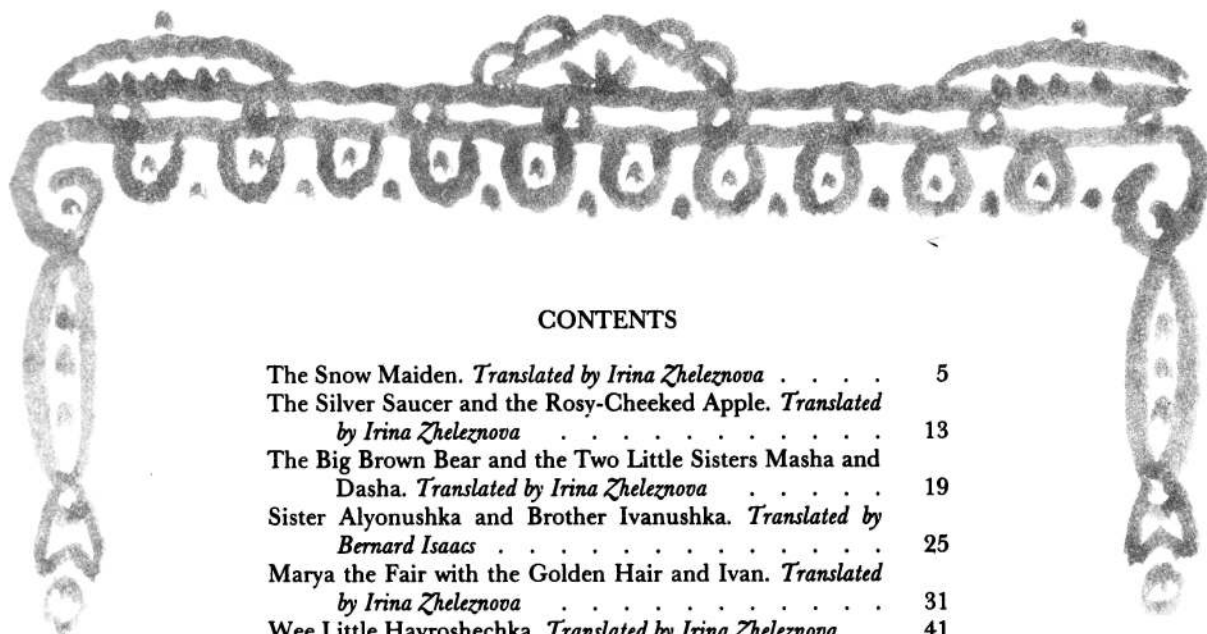
Russian Folk Tales

Translated by
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THE SNOW MAIDEN



All sorts of things happen in this world and all sorts of things are told about in fairy tales, so lend an ear, and a tale you'll hear.

Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife. They had a cow and they had a sheep, and they had a cat who was always asleep, but they had no children, and this it was that made them feel sad and woebegone.

One day in winter so much snow fell that it reached to the knee, and the neighbours' children all poured out into the street.

They rode down a hillside in sleds and threw snowballs at one another, many games they played and much noise they made, and then, tiring of it all, began making a snowman.

The old man looked out at them through the window, he looked and he looked, and then he said to his wife:

"Why do you sit there so silent and thoughtful, wife, looking at other people's children? Let us have a little fun in our old age, let us go out and make a snowman for ourselves."

Now, something must have made the old woman feel young and reckless too for once, for she said:

"All right, old man, let us go out. Only why should we make a snowman – one man, you, is enough for me – let us make a daughter for ourselves, a snow maiden."

No sooner said than done. Out went the old man and the old woman into their garden and began making





a snow maiden. They tried very hard and made a fine figure of snow.

They put in two bright blue beads for eyes, a strip of red ribbon for a mouth, and they made a little hole, a dimple, in each cheek, and, oh, how pretty their daughter Snow Maiden looked! The old man and the old woman gazed at her and marvelled and could not take their eyes off her.

Then something strange happened. Snow Maiden's mouth curved in a smile, her hair curled up at the ends, she moved first her hands and then her feet, took one step and then another, and began walking across the garden and up to the house.

The old man and the old woman almost lost their senses at the sight. They stood there as if glued to the spot and could not move!

"Look, just look at her, old man, she's alive!" the old woman cried. "We now have our own little daughter, and, oh, what a darling she is!"

She rushed to the house after Snow Maiden, the old man ran after her, and they were as happy as happy can be!

Snow Maiden grew fast, and not a day passed but she became prettier and prettier. The old man and the old woman fairly doted on her and could never have their fill of looking at her. Snow Maiden's eyes were blue and as bright as two beads, her plait of flaxen hair reached down to her waist, but her cheeks were not rosy and her lips were not red. Very pale was Snow Maiden, as pale and as white as the snow in winter, but for all that as bonny a lass as you're ever likely to meet.

Spring came, a beautiful spring. The skies were very blue, the buds swelled on the trees, the bees flew out into the fields, and the song of the lark rang overhead. The young men of the village were happy and so were the girls, and they sang gay songs of spring and sunshine.

Unlike them, Snow Maiden turned listless and melancholy, she would sit for hours at a time looking sadly out of the window, the tears streaming from her eyes.

Then, spring too passed and gave way to summer, the gardens were bright with flowers, and the corn ripened in the fields. But Snow Maiden was sadder than ever. She hid from the sun,





sought out the shade with its coolness, and liked nothing so much as standing under the rain, feeling the raindrops on her face.

The old man and the old woman worried about her and kept asking her if she was well, but Snow Maiden always replied that she was. She was not to be persuaded to go outside and stayed in the house, preferring the dark, shadowy corners where the sun could not reach.

One day Snow Maiden's friends prepared to set out for the forest to hunt for berries. Some hoped to find wild strawberries there, others, raspberries or huckleberries. They were very eager for Snow Maiden to go with them and said over and over again: "Do come with us, Snow Maiden, be a dear and come!"

But this the Snow Maiden, who feared the sunshine, did not want to do. Seeing her so unwilling, the old man and the old woman too began to urge her to join her playmates.

"Come, now, Snow Maiden, you must go," they said. "It'll do you good to be with your friends awhile and have a little fun."

So Snow Maiden took a basket and set out for the forest with the others.

Her friends wandered round in the forest, picked the flowers that grew there and made garlands of them, sang songs, danced and played games, but Snow Maiden kept apart from all. She found herself a cool spot by an icy brook and she sat there and gazed at the water, dipping her fingers in it now and then and playing with the cold drops as if they were so many beads.

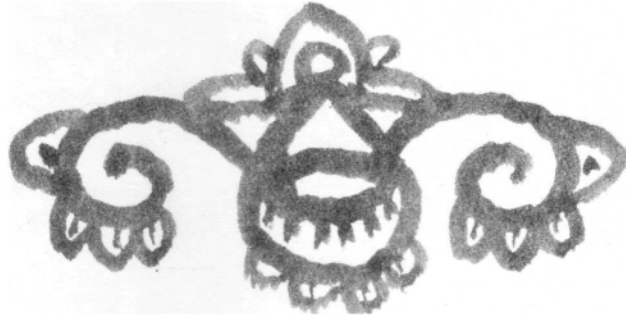
Evening came, and the girls' games grew gayer and noisier. They put on their garlands, made up a fire of brushwood and began jumping over the flames. Snow Maiden was loath to join them, but her friends called to her again and again till at last she agreed to come nearer. She stood by the fire trembling, her face pale as wax, and her flaxen hair, which had been plaited but had come unbound, tumbling about her shoulders.

"Jump, Snow Maiden, jump!" her friends cried.

Snow Maiden took a running jump, and lo! – the flames



gasped and sputtered and from somewhere just above them came a piteous moan. A whiff of white vapour drifted over the fire and, turning into a cloud, sailed up to the skies, but Snow Maiden ... Snow Maiden was gone. She had melted quite away and was seen no more.



THE SILVER SAUCER
AND THE ROSY-CHEEKED
APPLE



Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman and they had three daughters. The two elder daughters liked to dress up in fancy clothes and to play games and make merry, but the younger daughter was quiet and modest in all her ways. The elder daughters wore bright, flowered *sarafans*, and gilded beads, and boots with high, carved heels. But Masha's gowns were as dark as her eyes were light and clear. Her one beauty was her hair which fell to the ground in a golden plait and brushed the flowers that grew in her path as she walked. The elder daughters were lazy and sat about doing nothing like two grand ladies, but Masha was busy around the house and in the field and garden from morning till night. She would weed the vegetables and chop firewood for splinters to light the house with and milk the cows and feed the ducks. A person had only to ask and Masha would come running to bring whatever it was he wanted. Never would she cross anyone by so much as a word and she was always ready to do everyone's bidding. Her sisters would order her about and make her do their chores for them, and she would do them and say nothing.

And so it went.

One day, the old man made ready to take some hay to market, and he promised to bring back gifts for his daughters.

Said the first daughter:

"Buy me a length of blue silk for a *sarafan*, Father."

Said the second daughter:

"Buy me a length of red velvet."

But Masha said nothing.

The old man took pity on her.

"What shall I buy for you, Masha, my child?" he asked her.

"Well, Father dear, I should like a rosy-cheeked apple and a silver saucer."

At this Masha's sisters burst out laughing, and they laughed so hard that they all but split their sides.

"What a little fool you are, Masha!" they cried. "Why,

we have a whole orchard of apples, you can pick any you please. And as for the saucer, what do you need it-for – to feed the ducklings?”

“No, sisters dear. I shall roll the apple over the saucer and say magic words over it. An old beggar woman taught me them for giving her a *kalach*.”

At that they laughed harder than ever, and the old man said to them:

“Now that’s enough. I won’t have you laughing at your sister. And I shall bring all of you gifts after your own hearts.”

Whether he went far or near and whether he was long away or not no one knows, but the old man sold his hay and he bought his three daughters their gifts. To the first daughter he brought a length of blue silk, to the second daughter, a length of red velvet, and to Masha, a silver saucer and a rosy-cheeked apple.

The two elder sisters were overjoyed. They set to making their *sarafans* and they laughed at Masha.

“Sit there with your apple, you little fool,” said they to her.

And Masha sat down in a corner of the hut, she rolled her rosy-cheeked apple over her silver saucer, and she began to sing and chant:

“Roll, roll, rosy apple, over the silver saucer, show me towns and leas, show me forests and seas, show me mountains high and the blue-blue sky, show me all of Rus, of my own dear land!”

All of a sudden there came a ringing as of bells and the whole hut was flooded with light. Over the silver saucer rolled the rosy-cheeked apple and on the saucer, as clear as in real life, there appeared towns and vales, hills and dales, soldiers in the fields with swords and shields, grassy leas, ships on the seas, mountains high and the blue-blue sky. In the sky the bright sun sailed after the pale moon, and the stars danced in a ring, and on the lakes the swans sang their songs.

The sisters looked and turned green with envy. Their only thought now was to find a way of wheedling the saucer and apple out of Masha.

But Masha wanted nothing, would take nothing, and went on playing with her apple and saucer every evening.

One day, the sisters decided to lure her into the forest, and they said to Masha:

“Come, dear heart, come, sweet sister, let us go gathering berries in the forest. We’ll bring back some wild strawberries for Mother and Father.”

They went to the forest, but there were no berries to be seen anywhere. Masha took out her silver saucer, rolled her rosy-cheeked apple over it and said in a singsong voice:





"Roll, rosy apple, over the silver saucer, roll and show me where the wild strawberries are growing and the sky-blue flowers are blooming."

All at once there came a pealing of bells, the rosy-cheeked apple rolled over the silver saucer, and on the saucer, as clear as in real life, the forest and all its secret nooks appeared: the glades where the wild strawberries grew, the sky-blue flowers bloomed, the mushrooms hid and the springs gushed, and the lakes where the swans sang.

And Masha's two mean-hearted sisters watched and were filled with such envy that their sight grew dim. They caught up a knobby stick and they killed Masha with it. They buried her underneath a birch-tree and took the silver saucer and rosy-cheeked apple for themselves. It was evening by the time they reached home, bringing baskets full of mushrooms and berries, and they said to their mother and father:

"Masha ran away from us and got lost. We looked all over the forest, but could not find her. The wolves must have eaten her up in the thicket."

The mother burst into tears, and the father said:

"Roll the apple over the saucer and perhaps it will show us where our Masha is."

The sisters turned cold with fear, but they had to do as their father bade. They rolled the apple over the saucer, but the apple would not roll and the saucer would not spin and there was nothing to be seen on it: neither forests nor fields, neither mountains high nor the blue-blue sky.

Now at that very time and hour a young shepherd was out in the forest looking for a sheep that had strayed away from the flock, and he came upon a white birch-tree with a freshly-heaped mound of turf beneath it and sky-blue flowers growing all around. Shooting up amongst the flowers were some long, slender reeds. The shepherd cut himself a reed and made a pipe out of it. But no sooner had he brought the pipe to his lips than it began to play of itself and to sing out:

"Play, pipe, play for the shepherd to hear, sweet songs and gay, the shepherd to cheer! As for me, poor lass, they killed me, alas, for a silver saucer, for a rosy-cheeked apple."

The shepherd was frightened, and he ran straight to the village and told the villagers all about it. And they gathered round to hear him and gasped in horror.

Masha's father, too, came running up. And the moment he picked up the pipe it started playing of itself and singing:

"Play, pipe, play for my father to hear, sweet songs and gay, my father to cheer! As for me, poor lass, they killed me, alas, for a silver saucer, for a rosy-cheeked apple."

The father began to weep.

"Take us to where you cut the reed for your pipe, shepherd," he said.

The shepherd led them to the mound in the forest, and there were sky-blue flowers growing beneath the birch-tree and tomtits perching on its boughs and singing away. They dug up the mound, and there beneath it lay Masha, dead, but looking more beautiful than ever. She seemed to be asleep, poor maid, for on her cheeks the roses played. And the pipe went on playing and singing:

"Play, pipe, play, sad songs and gay. Listen, Father, to what I say. By my sisters was I to the forest ta'en, by my sisters was I in the forest slain. Play, pipe, play, sad songs and gay. Listen, Father, to what I say. If you wish to see me alive and well, fetch some crystal water from the Tsar's own well."

At this, Masha's two black-hearted sisters trembled and turned pale, they fell on their knees and confessed their crime. And they were put away behind locks of iron to await the Tsar's orders, his high decree.

The old man made ready and set off for the Tsar's city to fetch the living water.

Whether a long time passed by or a little time nobody knows, but he finally reached the Tsar's city and came to the Tsar's palace just as the Tsar was coming down from his porch of gold.

The old man bowed to the ground and told the Tsar all about everything.

Said the Tsar:

"You may take some living water from my well, old man, and when your daughter comes to life, bring her to me together with the two vipers, her sisters, and mind she does not forget to take along her silver saucer and rosy-cheeked apple."

The old man was overjoyed and bowed to the ground again many times, and he took home with him a phial of the living water.

No sooner had he sprayed Masha with the living water than she came alive again and clung to him as tenderly as a dove.

The people came running up and they rejoiced in the sight.

And now the old man set off again for the Tsar's city with his three daughters. He arrived there in due time and was led into the palace.

The Tsar came in and he glanced at Masha. There she stood as lovely as a spring flower, her eyes as bright as the rays of the sun, her face as fair as the sky at dawn, and the tears rolling down her cheeks like the purest of pearls.



"Where is your silver saucer and rosy-cheeked apple?" asked the Tsar of Masha.

And Masha took them out, and she rolled the rosy-cheeked apple over the silver saucer.

All of a sudden there came a great ringing of bells, and one after another Russian cities and towns appeared on the saucer. Into the towns the regiments streamed with their battle flags flowing, and formed into fighting order, the captains standing in front of the lines, the *sotniks*, in front of the hundreds, and the *desyatniks*, in front of columns of ten. And such was the firing and shooting, so thick the smoke, that the field of battle was hid from sight as if the day had turned into night.

The rosy-cheeked apple rolled over the silver saucer, and on the saucer the sea appeared, rising in waves, with the ships sailing on it as smoothly as swans, the flags waving and the cannon barking. And such was the firing and shooting, so thick the smoke, that all was soon hid from sight as if the day had turned into night.

The rosy-cheeked apple rolled over the silver saucer, and on the saucer the sky appeared in all its beauty: the bright sun sailed after the pale crescent moon, the stars danced in a ring and the swans up in the clouds sang their songs.

The Tsar was filled with wonder at so rare a sight, but Masha wept and wept and could not stop.

Said she to the Tsar:

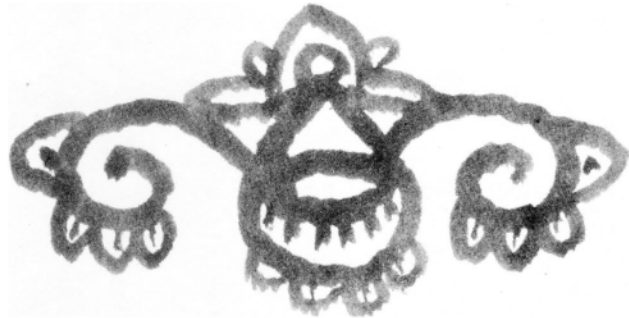
"Take my rosy-cheeked apple and my silver saucer, only pardon my sisters, do not put them to death because of me."

And the Tsar lifted her up from her knees and said:

"Your saucer is of silver, but your heart is of gold. Will you be my own dear wife and a kind and gentle Tsarina for my tsardom? And as for your sisters, I shall pardon them since you ask me to."

There was no need to brew beer or to make wine, for the Tsar's cellars overflowed with both, and so the wedding was held without further ado, and a feast to celebrate it. To say the least, 'twas a right noble feast. So loud did they play without pause or stop that the stars from the sky began to drop. So hard did they dance, as I hear tell, that they broke their heels and the floor as well.

And that, dear friend, is the tale's end.



THE BIG BROWN BEAR AND
THE TWO LITTLE SISTERS
MASHA AND DASHA



Once upon a time there lived an old woman and her two granddaughters, Masha and Dasha.

One day Dasha made ready to set out for the forest to hunt for berries and mushrooms.

"Keep to the path and don't go far, Dasha, my child," said the old woman. "And don't jump over tree stumps."

"Never fear, I'll do as you say, Grandma," said Dasha.

Off made Dasha for the forest, and when she got there, she walked slowly along humming a song and picking one berry after another. And before she knew it she had strayed off the path and found herself in a dense thicket. She began jumping over tree stumps, and a Cuckoo-bird, sitting high up in a tall oak tree, saw her and called:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Go to the left, little girl!"

So Dasha turned to the left and went on again.

All of a sudden as if out of thin air a Big Brown Bear appeared before her. He caught Dasha up in his arms and away he ran with her! On and on ran Bear and he did not stop till he reached his house. It was a large house and a rich one. Its cellar and pantry were stocked with cabbage and turnips and carrots and beets and with mushrooms and honey and seed-cakes and sweets, and in another room were large sacks full of the finest wool and also bags of down and of chicken feathers and sheepskin coats to be worn in cold weather.

The Bear brought Dasha into the house and set her down on the floor.

"I'm so glad to have you here, my girl!" he said. "I have long needed someone to keep house for me. You'll heat the stove and you'll make the bed, you'll cook the soup and you'll bake the bread, you'll knit and you'll sew and you'll keep the place neat and be quick with your hands and quick on your feet! And as for me, I'll go hunting each morning out in the wood and bring back for us both something tasty and good."

The tears rolled from Dasha's eyes, she cried and cried, and wanting to comfort her, the Bear brought her some honey and berries and nuts to eat. Dasha went on crying for a long time, but she stopped at last and went to bed.

It was morning when the Bear roused her.

"I'm going out hunting now," said he. "Make me some cabbage soup and weave a warm cover for my bed and see to it that they're ready by the time I get back."

The Bear went away, and Dasha set to work, but her fingers seemed to be all thumbs and she could not get anything done right. She poured some water into a cooking-pot to make soup, and it overflowed and put out the fire, filling the hut with smoke. She sat down to weave, and the thread tore, and big and little knots kept forming where they were least wanted. So what with the smoke and the thread that tore, she grew weary of limb and of heart turned sore.

Evening arrived, and the Bear came home. He looked, and the walls of the hut were black with soot and so was the window, and the soup was over-salted and had a bitter taste.

The Bear felt sleepy, so he got into bed, but no sooner had he covered himself with his new blanket than up he jumped in a fury!

"What's this!" he roared. "The cover you made for me is as rough as sacking. It's scratchy and tickly and terribly prickly. I've never seen a creature as lazy as you are, Dasha! Go into the cellar and stay there, and while you're there don't forget to pick over the turnips and count the cabbages, that should keep you busy for a while."

And with that he locked Dasha up in a dark cellar.

And as for the old woman and Masha, they guessed that Dasha had lost her way and searched for her for many a day. They looked high and low, but she never turned up, so after a while they were forced to stop.

Time is known to fly, some months passed by, and one day Masha prepared to set out for the forest to hunt for berries.

"Keep to the path and don't go far, Masha, my child, or you might get lost," said the old woman. "And don't jump over tree stumps."

"Never fear, Grandma, I'll do as you say," Masha said.

Off made Masha for the forest, and when she got there she walked slowly along humming a song and picking one berry after another. And before she knew it she had strayed off the path and found herself in a dense thicket. She began jumping over tree stumps, and a Cuckoo-bird sitting high up in a tall oak tree saw her and called:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Go to the right, little girl!"

So Masha turned to the right and went on again.

All of a sudden as if out of thin air a Big Brown Bear appeared before her. He caught Masha up in his arms, and away he ran with her! On and on ran the Bear and he did not stop till he reached his house.





"I'm so glad to have you here, my girl!" said he to Masha. "I have long needed someone to keep house for me. You'll make up a fire when it gets to be cool and knit me some mittens of good, warm wool, and it's nice and early you'll learn to rise to cook me some soup and bake me some pies. And now I'm going out hunting, and you must make me some cabbage soup and weave a warm cover for my bed, and see to it that they're ready by the time I get back."

The Bear went away, and Masha went from room to room, she walked all about the house, and she looked into the pantry and peeked into the cellar. In the house were large sacks, and these were full of the finest wool, of bags of down and of chicken feathers, and of sheepskin coats to be worn in cold weather, and the pantry and cellar were large and stocked with cabbage and turnips and carrots and beets, with mushrooms and honey and seed-cakes and sweets. And there, sitting in the cellar's farthest corner, was Masha's own little sister Dasha!

The two little girls wept for joy to see one another.

"You stay in the cellar where you are," said Masha to Dasha, "and I will think of a way of getting us both out of here."

She climbed the cellar steps back into the house and set to work. She made some soup and some porridge too, and she scrubbed the floor till it looked brand new. Then she sat down by the still warm stove, and a soft wool cover for the Bear she wove. Quick of hand she was and was soon all done, with the cover a treat to look upon.

The Bear come home, and the hut was clean and bright and pleasant to be in, and the cabbage soup and porridge were hot and ready to eat.

"What a clever girl you are, Masha!" the Bear cried. "More clever and wise than any I've ever seen."

He went to bed and he passed his paws over the new cover and said:

"What a lovely cover this is! It's as warm as a stove and as light as air. I've not seen a better one, I vow and swear! It feels nice on my shoulders and nice on my feet, and it looks very pretty and neat as neat."

And with that he fell asleep, and Masha called Dasha, fed her and then put her to bed on the stove ledge.

In the morning, no sooner was the Bear up and awake than he said to Masha:

"What can I do to please you, little girl? Ask of me whatever you wish."

Said Masha in reply:

"I don't want anything for myself, Bear, but I wish you could take something nice to eat to my grandmother."

"Very well, I'll do that," the Bear said.

"I'll bake her some pies and put them in a sack, and you take it to our house and leave it on the threshold. Only don't look into the sack or eat any of the pies. I'll be sitting on the roof and watching you, so remember, Bear, of cheating beware!"

"Never fear, I'll do just as you say," the Bear said.

Away he went to hunt in the forest, and Masha baked some pies and told Dasha to climb into the sack. When Dasha had done so, she climbed into it after her and then put the pies on top, covering herself and Dasha with them.

The Bear came home, he saw the sack with the pies, threw it over his shoulder and set out on his way.

On he walked – clumpety-clump! – trampling the berries and grass and snapping off the branches that hung in his path, and by and by he was very, very tired and hungry too. So he stopped and said:

"If I don't rest my bones I think I will die, so I'll sit on a stump and eat a pie!"

But Masha called out from the sack in a thin little voice: "I see you! I see you! Don't sit on the stump or eat my pie but take it to Grandma for her to try!"

"Dear me, what sharp eyes Masha has," said the Bear. "She can see everything from the rooftop."

On he walked – clumpety-clump! – trampling the berries and grass and breaking off the branches that hung in his path, and by and by he was very, very tired and hungry too.

"I have left my house and Masha far behind me now," said he, "so I can sit down and eat a pie without her seeing me."

But Masha called out from the sack in a thin little voice:

"I see you! I see you! Don't sit on the stump or eat my pie but take it to Grandma for her to try!"

"Dear me, what sharp eyes Masha has!" the Bear said. "There is nothing to be done, so I'd better take this sack to her grandmother as quick as I can, for then I can go back again and have my supper."

On he rushed – clumpety-clump! – and, reaching the old woman's house, threw the sack in through the gate and made off again at a run.

The old woman came out onto the porch, and there, lying before her, she saw a sack. She undid the string that tied it, took out a pie, bit off a piece and began to cry.



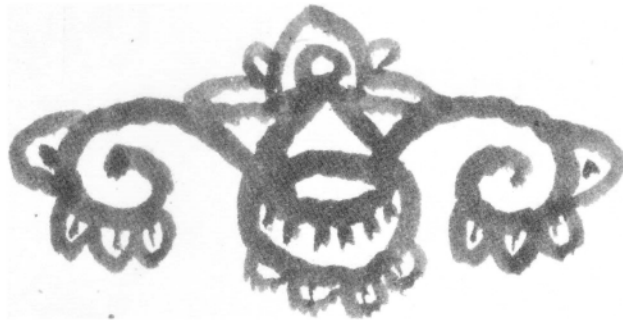
"This pie tastes just like the ones Masha used to bake!" sobbed she. "Where, O where are my two little granddaughters?"

But she had no sooner said this than out jumped Dasha and Masha from the sack.

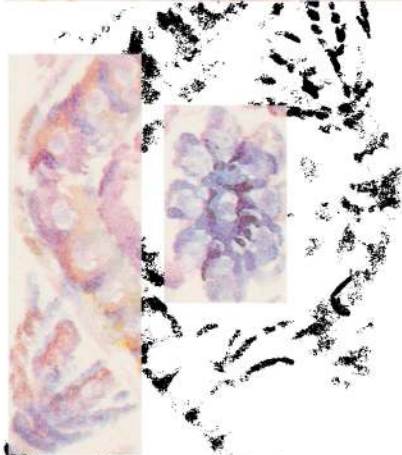
"Here we are, Grandma!" they cried.

And so happy were they that they began to dance, and as they danced they sang a little song:

*"Tweet," a bird called, "tweeter!"
Said another, "Cheeter!"
It was Uncle Vanya
Brought a pot of honey.
Dasha had a dishful,
Masha said: "Delicious!"
Grandfather Yegor
Ate and asked for more.
It was close to noon
When I found a spoon.
Nearby, in the brush,
Steamed a pot of mush,
And, deep in the wood,
Another stood.
So nothing loath,
I went at both,
And I never stopped
Till I ate the mush up.
Mm, it was good!"*



SISTER ALYONUSHKA
AND BROTHER IVANUSHKA



Once there lived an old man and his wife, and they had a daughter named Alyonushka and a son named Ivanushka.

The old man and the old woman died, and Alyonushka and Ivanushka were left all alone in the world.

Alyonushka set off to work and took her little brother with her. They had a long way to go, and a wide field to cross, and after they had been walking for a time, Ivanushka began to feel very thirsty.

"Sister Alyonushka, I am thirsty," he said.

"Be patient, little brother, we shall soon come to a well."

They walked and they walked, and the sun was now high up in the sky, and so hot were the two that they felt very blue. They came upon a cow's hoof filled with water, and Ivanushka said:

"May I drink out of the hoof, Sister Alyonushka?"

"No, little brother. If you do, you will turn into a calf."

Ivanushka obeyed, and they walked on a bit farther.

The sun was still high up in the sky, and the heat was so bad that they felt very sad. They came upon a horse's hoof filled with water, and Ivanushka said:

"May I drink out of the hoof, Sister Alyonushka?"

"No, little brother. If you do, you will turn into a foal."

Ivanushka sighed and they walked on again.

They walked and they walked, but the sun was still high up in the sky, and the air was so dry that they felt they could die. They came upon a goat's hoof filled with water, and Ivanushka said:

"I am dying of thirst, Sister Alyonushka. May I drink out of the hoof?"

"No, little brother. If you do, you will turn into a kid."

But Ivanushka did not heed his sister and drank out of the goat's hoof.

And the moment he did so he turned into a little white goat.

Alyonushka called her brother, and instead of Ivanushka the goat came running up to her.

Alyonushka burst into tears. She sat sobbing on the ground by a stack of hay while the little goat skipped round in play.



Just then a Merchant chanced to be riding by.

"What are you crying for, pretty maid?" asked he.

Alyonushka told him of her trouble.

Said the Merchant:

"Marry me, pretty maid. I will dress you in gold and silver, and the little goat will live with us."

Alyonushka thought it over and agreed to marry the Merchant.

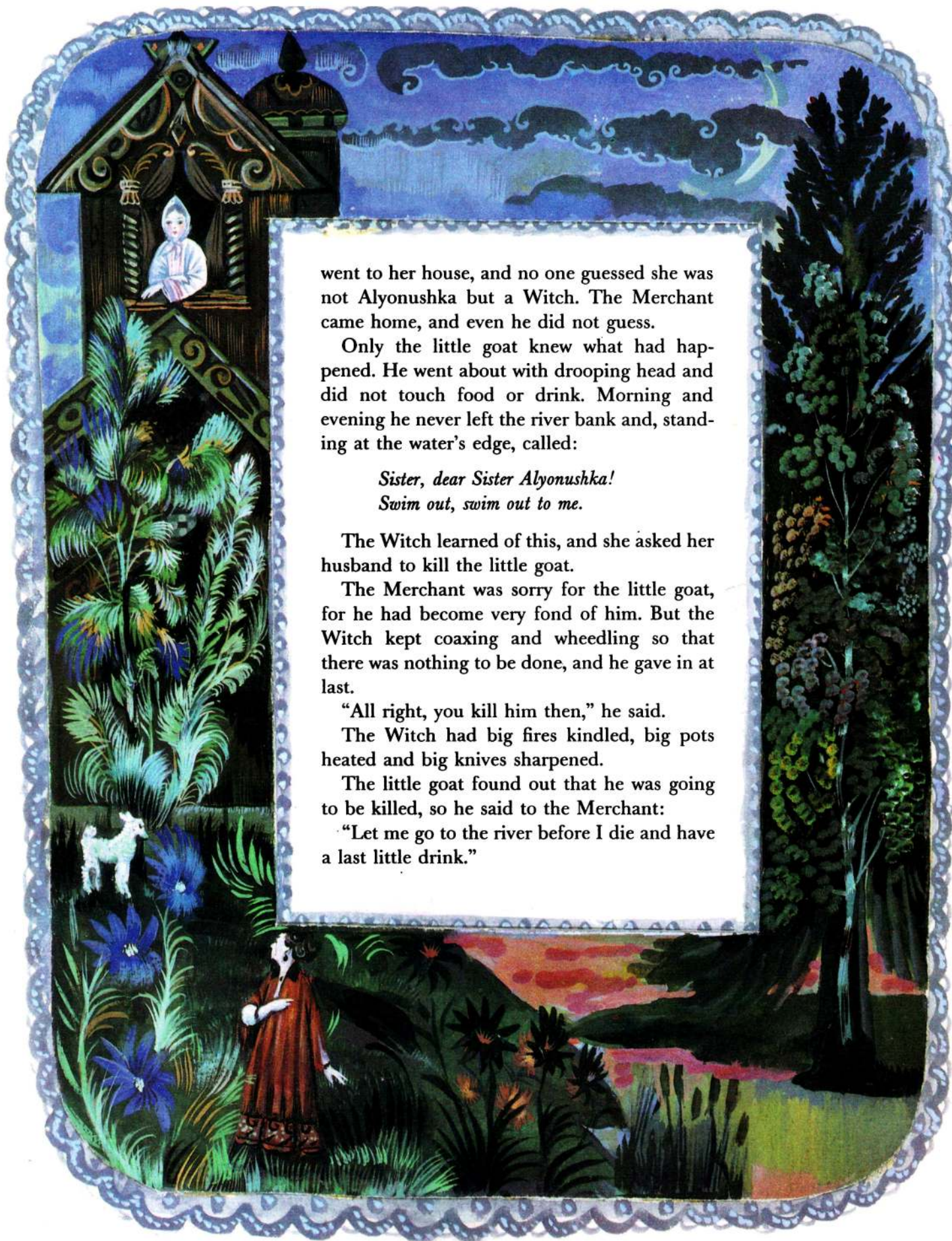
They lived together happily, and the little goat lived with them and ate and drank with Alyonushka out of the same cup.

One day the Merchant went away from home and all of a sudden a Witch appeared out of nowhere. She stood under Alyonushka's window and begged her ever so sweetly to go and bathe in the river with her.

Alyonushka followed the Witch to the river, and when they got there the Witch fell upon Alyonushka and, tying a stone round her neck, threw her into the water and herself took on her shape.

Then she put on Alyonushka's clothes and





went to her house, and no one guessed she was not Alyonushka but a Witch. The Merchant came home, and even he did not guess.

Only the little goat knew what had happened. He went about with drooping head and did not touch food or drink. Morning and evening he never left the river bank and, standing at the water's edge, called:

*Sister, dear Sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me.*

The Witch learned of this, and she asked her husband to kill the little goat.

The Merchant was sorry for the little goat, for he had become very fond of him. But the Witch kept coaxing and wheedling so that there was nothing to be done, and he gave in at last.

"All right, you kill him then," he said.

The Witch had big fires kindled, big pots heated and big knives sharpened.

The little goat found out that he was going to be killed, so he said to the Merchant:

"Let me go to the river before I die and have a last little drink."



"Go," said the Merchant.
The little goat ran to the river, stood on the
bank and cried piteously:

*Sister, dear Sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me.
Fires are burning high,
Pots are boiling,
Knives are ringing,
And I am going to die.*

And Alyonushka answered from out the river:

*Brother, dear Brother Ivanushka!
A heavy stone lies on my shoulders,
Silken weeds entangle my legs,
Yellow sands press hard on my breast.*

The Witch set out in search of the goat, but
she could not find him, so she called a servant
and said:

"Go and find the goat and bring him
to me."

The servant went to the river, and what did
he see but the little goat running up and down
the bank, calling piteously:

*Sister, dear Sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me.
Fires are burning high,
Pots are boiling,
Knives are ringing
And I am going to die.*

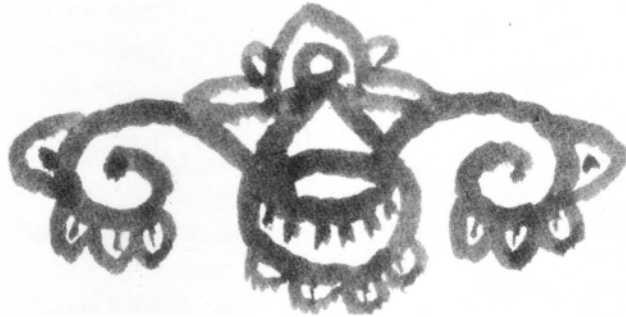
And from the river someone's voice called back:

*Brother, dear Brother Iwanushka!
A heavy stone lies on my shoulders,
Silken weeds entangle my legs,
Yellow sands press hard on my breast.*

The servant ran home and told his master what he had heard and seen. The Merchant called some people together, they went down to the river and, casting a silken net, dragged Alyonushka out on to the bank. They untied the stone which was round her neck, dipped her in spring water and dressed her in bright clothes. And Alyonushka came back to life and was more beautiful than ever.

The little goat was wild with joy, he turned three somersaults, and lo and behold! He was changed into his proper shape again.

And the wicked Witch was tied to a horse's tail and the horse turned loose in an open field.



MARYA THE FAIR WITH
THE GOLDEN HAIR
AND IVAN



In a certain tsardom, in a certain realm there lived a Tsar and Tsarina who had only one child, a daughter named Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair.

They were at peace and happy when all of a sudden something terrible happened. A fearful Dragon who had nine heads, nine trunks and nine tails, descended on their tsardom, bringing with him two of his sons, two young Dragons, the first with six heads to him and the second with three.

"Hear me, O Tsar, hear me, O Tsarina, hear me, O Russian people!" the Dragon roared. "It is my intention to burn down your tsardom and cast the ashes into the wind, to uproot all your forests, drain all your lakes and rivers, trample all your fields and meadows and slay you all! If you want to stay alive, you must promise to feed me and my sons till the day we die. Every day, as soon as evening comes and, with it, twilight, you must leave a young maid of sixteen on top of Buyan Mountain for us to eat. If we are fed, we'll leave you be; if we are not, just wait and see!"

What was there to be done?

The people burst out weeping, but they could think of nothing that would help them, so every day from that time on, as soon as evening came and twilight with it, a maid of sixteen was led to the top of Buyan Mountain and chained to an ancient oak that grew there. The three Dragons would then come flying up, gobble up the maid and throw her bones into the sea.

Now, at that same time and in those same parts there lived on the edge of the town a poor old woman with her dearly beloved grandson Ivan.

One day, Ivan was out on the shore of the blue sea, and he saw Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair dancing with her mates on the golden sand, and so lovely was she that he fell head over heels in love with her.

Some time passed by, and all of a sudden the news spread throughout that Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair was to be led on the next day to the top of Buyan Mountain, there to be eaten by the Dragons. The Tsar wept, the Tsarina sobbed, and the church bells rang a knell for the maid.

On the following morning Ivan rose early.

"Get me out a clean linen shirt, Grandma," said he to his grand-





mother, "for I am going out to fight the wicked Dragons. And I'll either save Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair or die myself!"

The grandmother burst out crying, but she gave him the linen shirt he asked for. Then she ran out into the garden, brought back some nettles and began to plait him another shirt out of them, the tears streaming from her eyes as she did so, for the nettles stung her hands.

"There," said she when the shirt was ready, "put this shirt on, Ivan. If the Dragons try to bite you they'll burn their tongues."

"Very well, Grandma, I shall do as you say," Ivan said.

Evening came and twilight with it, and Ivan put on the linen shirt and, on top of it, the one made of nettles, took a sharp scythe and an iron cudgel, said goodbye to his grandmother and set out for Buyan Mountain.

He climbed to the mountain, and what did he see there but an ancient oak and, chained to it, Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair. Marya the Fair saw Ivan, and the tears poured from her eyes.

"Why have you come here, brave lad?" said she. "My fate it is to be killed and slain, my blood it is that this grass will stain, but why should you sacrifice your young life so foolishly? The Dragons will come flying up any minute now and eat you up!"

"Never fear, fair maid! It may well be that they'll choke on me first!" And with these words Ivan came up to Marya the Fair, and, grasping the golden chain that bound her to the tree with one hand, tore it in two as though it was a frayed rope. Then he lay down on the ground, placed his head on Marya the Fair's knee and said:

"I shall have a short sleep, Marya the Fair, and you watch the sea. As soon as a dark cloud appears in the sky, the wind begins to blow and the sea swells up in waves, don't waste a minute but wake me!"

Ivan closed his eyes and fell into a sound sleep, and Marya the Fair began watching the sea. All of a sudden a cloud darkened the sky, the wind began to howl and roar, huge waves appeared on the water, and from out of them rose a Dragon, he of the three heads.

Marya the Fair just had time enough to rouse Ivan, who at once jumped to his feet, when there was the Dragon upon them!

"What has brought you here, Ivan?" the Dragon roared. "Bid the bright world goodbye and climb into my throat yourself, it'll be the easier for you."

"You lie, you cursed monster!" Ivan replied in a loud voice. "You'll never be able to swallow me, you'll choke on me first."

And he snatched up his sharp scythe, waved it with all the strength of his arm and smote off the Dragon's three heads. Then he picked up all three of them, cut out the tongues and hid them in his sack, and thrust the heads under a large grey stone. After that, giving the Dragon's body a push and sending it toppling down into the sea, he flung himself on the sand and fell into a sound sleep.

There stood Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair, more dead than alive, and she did not know whether to cry or to laugh for sheer joy. She sat down on the ground, raised Ivan's head gently, and, wiping the sweat off it with a silk kerchief, placed it on her knee. All of a sudden a cloud darkened the sky, the wind began howling and roaring, the sea swelled up in great waves, and out of them rose the Dragon, he of the six heads and began to climb Buyan Mountain.

Marya the Fair saw him and began trying to rouse Ivan, but as Ivan did not wake, she seized him by the hair and pulled hard.

"Wake up, Ivan!" she cried. "Wake up! Our death is upon us!"





Ivan heard her and leapt to his feet, and, seeing him, the Dragon began snorting and growling.

"I am sorry for you, brave lad!" he cried. "It's no use eating you piece by piece, for there's no taste to you, so I'll have to swallow you whole."

"Never you mind," Ivan replied. "You may well choke on me before ever you eat me!"

And Ivan snatched up his sharp scythe, waved it with all the strength of his arm and smote off three of the Dragon's head. But the other three heads remained, and the smoke that poured from them stung his eyes, and the flame that streaked from them seared and burnt them.

Seeing this, Marya the Fair seized her long golden plait and began lashing the Dragon over the eyes with it! The Dragon turned to face her, and Ivan at once rushed up and smote off his three remaining heads. Then he cut out the tongues, hid the heads under the grey stone, and, giving the body a push and sending it hurtling down into the sea, he flung himself on the sand and fell fast asleep. And Marya the Fair lifted his head, placed it on her knee and wiped the sweat off it with her silk kerchief.

All of a sudden a cloud darkened the sky, the wind began howling and roaring, huge waves swelled up on the sea, and the old Dragon, he of the nine heads, nine trunks and nine tails, rose up out of them. Each of his tails lashed at the ground, each of his trunks hummed a tune, and each of his heads gnashed its teeth.

Marya the Fair was more frightened than ever and began trying to rouse Ivan. "Get up, Ivan, get up!" she cried. "The old Dragon is coming, and he is going to eat us up!"

But Ivan slept the sleep of the dead and did not wake. Marya the Fair stood there, and the tears poured from her eyes.

"Wake up, wake up, Ivan!" she cried again. "A Russian does not meet death lying down, he faces it standing."

At this Ivan started up, he leapt to his feet and snatched up his sharp scythe. And at the very same moment the Dragon, he of the nine heads, flew straight at him, snorting and sniffing.

"A fine lad you are, Ivan, and a handsome one," said he, "but death is in store for you. For I will eat you up together with the bones!"

"You lie, you cursed serpent!" Ivan cried. "You won't eat me up, you'll choke on me first."

They came together and clashed, and the battle they fought was a battle to the death. The trees roundabout were shaken to the roots, they swayed and they moaned, they creaked and they groaned, the sand rose into the air in clouds, and great waves furrowed the sea. Spurts of flame came from the Dragon's mouth and scorched Ivan, smoke poured from his nose and choked him, but Ivan fought on. He went at the Dragon with his scythe, again and again he brandished it till it turned red-hot in his hands. Seven of the Dragon's heads rolled down to the ground, but two more were left, and these Ivan seemed unable to cut off. The Dragon came close and caught Ivan between his teeth, but he spat him out again at once, for the shirt of nettles burnt his tongue.

Marya the Fair now ran up and began lashing the Dragon over the eyes with her golden plait. The Dragon turned to face her, and Ivan availed himself of this, and, rushing up to the Dragon, smote off his two remaining heads. After that he cut out all of the Dragon's tongues, hid his nine heads under the grey stone and pushed his body over the cliff and down into the sea.

Marya the Fair, who had been watching him, now fell at Ivan's feet.

"Thank you, Ivan, thank you, dear heart!" she cried. "Not only have you delivered





me from a terrible death but you have freed the whole Russian land from the Dragons' presence. Now shall you be an aide to my father the Tsar, a beloved son to my mother the Tsarina, and my own promised husband."

And, taking a golden ring from her finger, she slipped it on the little finger of Ivan's right hand.

But Ivan swayed on his feet, and streams of sweat and blood ran down his face. Onto the wet sand Ivan dropped and, so spent and weary was he, fell at once into a deep sleep.

Marya the Fair sat down beside him. She sat there and watched over his slumber and waved away the flies and mosquitoes.

Some time went by, and the Tsar's water-carrier happened to be driving past there. His wagon was poor and its wheels creaked and groaned, and his horse was a weary old nag and all bones. And he himself was an awful sight, being ugly and covered with dirt, with a head like a pod and with hands and feet like so many rakes. He looked, and there on the sand sat Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair, beside her, buried deep in the soundest sleep, lay Ivan, and a little way off, under a huge grey stone, were the Dragons' heads.

The water-carrier caught Marya the Fair by her plait, dumped her into his wagon and drove off with her to a dense forest. There he got out his knife and began to sharpen it.

"Why do you sharpen your knife? What is it you mean to do?" asked Marya the Fair.

"My words will chill you, for I mean to kill you!" the man replied.

Marya the Fair burst into tears.

"Why should you kill me?" she cried. "Don't do it. I haven't done you any harm."

"Tell your father that it was I who saved your life and freed the Russian land from the Dragons and swear to marry and be a faithful wife to me, and I will spare your life," the water-carrier said.

There was no help for it, so Marya the Fair agreed to this, and away she rode with him to the palace in his dirty old wagon. The water-carrier took Marya the Fair to the Tsar and showed him the Dragons' heads.

"You have me to thank for ridding you of the Dragons!" said he.

The Tsar was overjoyed, made the water-carrier a colonel and promised to give Marya the Fair to him in marriage.

"We are going to hold the wedding feast in three days' time," said he.

And as for Marya the Fair, she wept but was afraid to say anything.

Three days passed by, and it was drawing on toward evening on the third day when Ivan at last woke from his sleep. He looked, and there he was all alone on top of Buyan Mountain with no Marya the Fair beside him and the Dragons' heads that he had put under the grey stone gone.

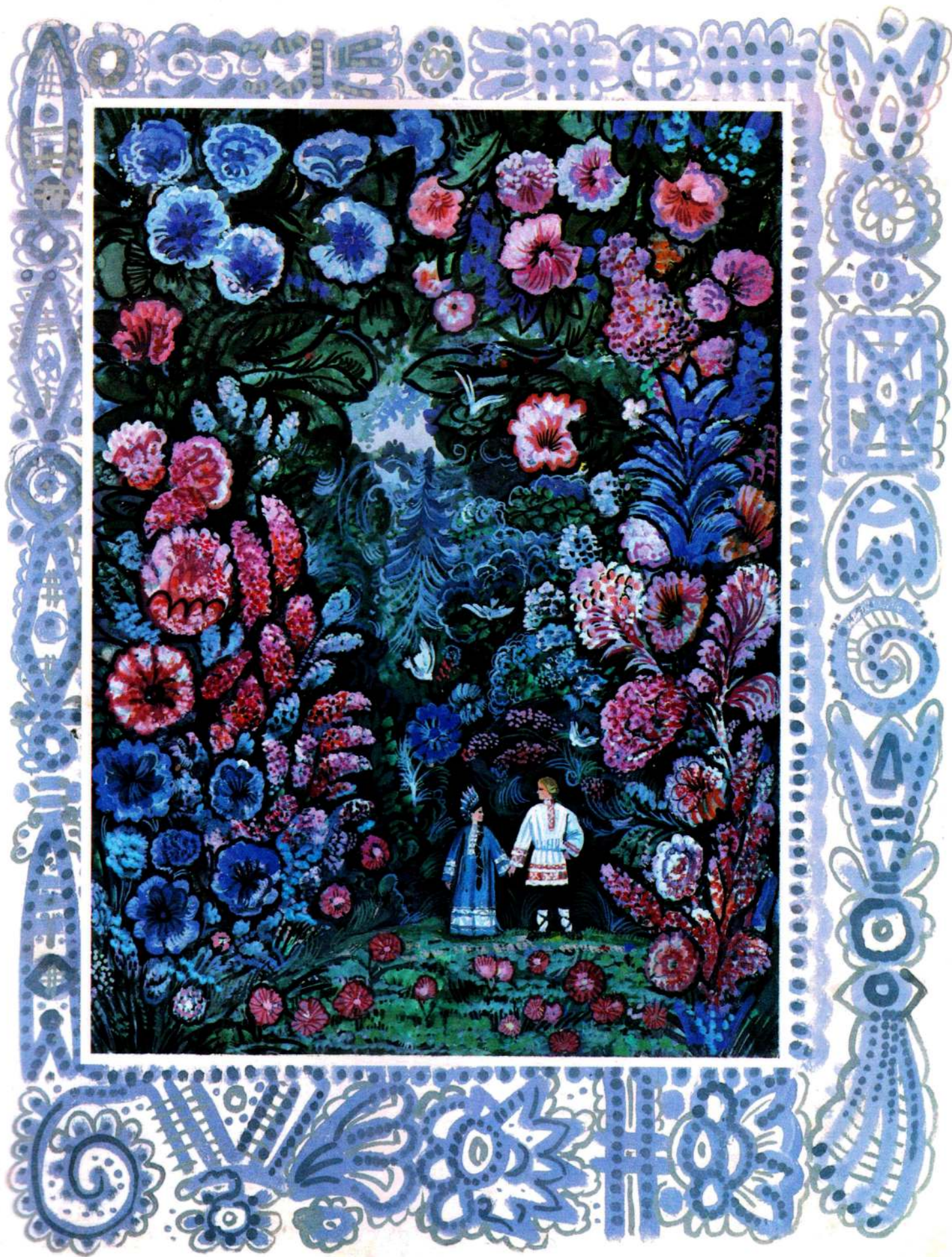
Back went Ivan to his grandmother's house, and, oh, how happy his grandmother was to see him! She brought out homemade pies for him to eat and heated up the bathhouse for him to bathe in. And Ivan said to her:

"Go into town, Grandma, and hear what the people are saying."

The grandmother did as he asked, and when she came back, said:

"The people are saying, Ivan, that the Tsar is to hold a great feast tonight, for he is marrying his daughter Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair to the water-carrier."

Ivan said nothing to this, but he steamed and washed himself in the bathhouse and put on a clean shirt, and he looked as nice and handsome a lad as could be found anywhere!



Evening arrived, and he made straight for the palace where a great feast was in progress. The guests ate and drank and played all sorts of games, and the water-carrier went from chamber to chamber and boasted noisily of his prowess.

"Who was it but me that saved you from death, you slaves?" he shouted. "You won't dare so much as utter a word in front of me now!"

And Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair sat there as white as a sheet, her eyes puffed and red with weeping.

Ivan picked up a golden goblet, filled it with sweet mead, dropped the ring Marya the Fair had given him into it, and calling a maidservant, said to her:

"Take this to Marya the Fair with my compliments and tell her to drink the mead to the health of him who saved her from death."

The maidservant took the goblet to Marya the Fair, Marya the Fair drained it, and the ring rolled down and knocked against her lips. She took it out, and, oh, how glad she was to see it!

"Hear me, O Tsar my father!" she said. "It was not he who sits beside me, boasting, that saved my life, but he whom you see standing yonder amid the guests. He it was I gave this ring to, he it was I promised to wed." And she added in loud tones: "Come, Ivan, step forward and let my father see you!"

Ivan stepped out onto the middle of the floor, and Marya the Fair came up to him. The guests oh'd and ah'd and exchanged glances.

Up jumped the water-carrier from his seat and began railing at Ivan.

"You bad so-and-so!" he cried. "Dare you deceive the Tsar? Who but he that slew the Dragons could have cut off their heads and brought them to the palace?"

"If it was you that slew them and cut off their heads," Ivan returned, "then speak and tell us what it is that is missing in them."

"Nothing is, the heads are whole!" the water-carrier said. "I did not carve them up in any way but smote them off at one go."

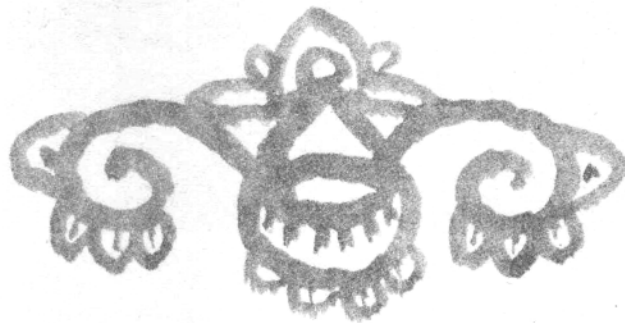
Ivan lifted the Dragons' heads one by one and pulled open the jaws.

"There, now all can see what is missing in the heads," he said. "The tongues are! They are here, in my sack."

"And here is my silk kerchief," said Marya the Fair. "It is stained with Ivan's sweat and with his blood."

At this the Tsar became very angry and ordered the water-carrier to be given a lashing and driven out of the palace. And that same night he gave Marya the Fair with the Golden Hair in marriage to Ivan.

And that is my faithful tale's end. I have told it well and deserve in reward a cupful of mead from the festive board.



WEE LITTLE
HAVROSHECHKA



There are good people in the world and some who are not so good. There are also people who are shameless in their wickedness.

Wee Little Havroshechka had the bad luck to fall in with such as these. She was an orphan and these people took her in and brought her up only to make her work till she could not stand. She spun and wove and did the housework and had to answer for everything.

Now, the mistress of the house had three daughters. The eldest was called One-Eye, the second Two-Eyes, and the youngest Three-Eyes. The three sisters did nothing all day but sit by the gate and watch what went on in the street, while Wee Little Havroshechka sewed, spun and wove for them and never heard a kind word in return.

Sometimes Wee Little Havroshechka would go out into the field, put her arms round the neck of her brindled cow and pour out all her sorrows to her.

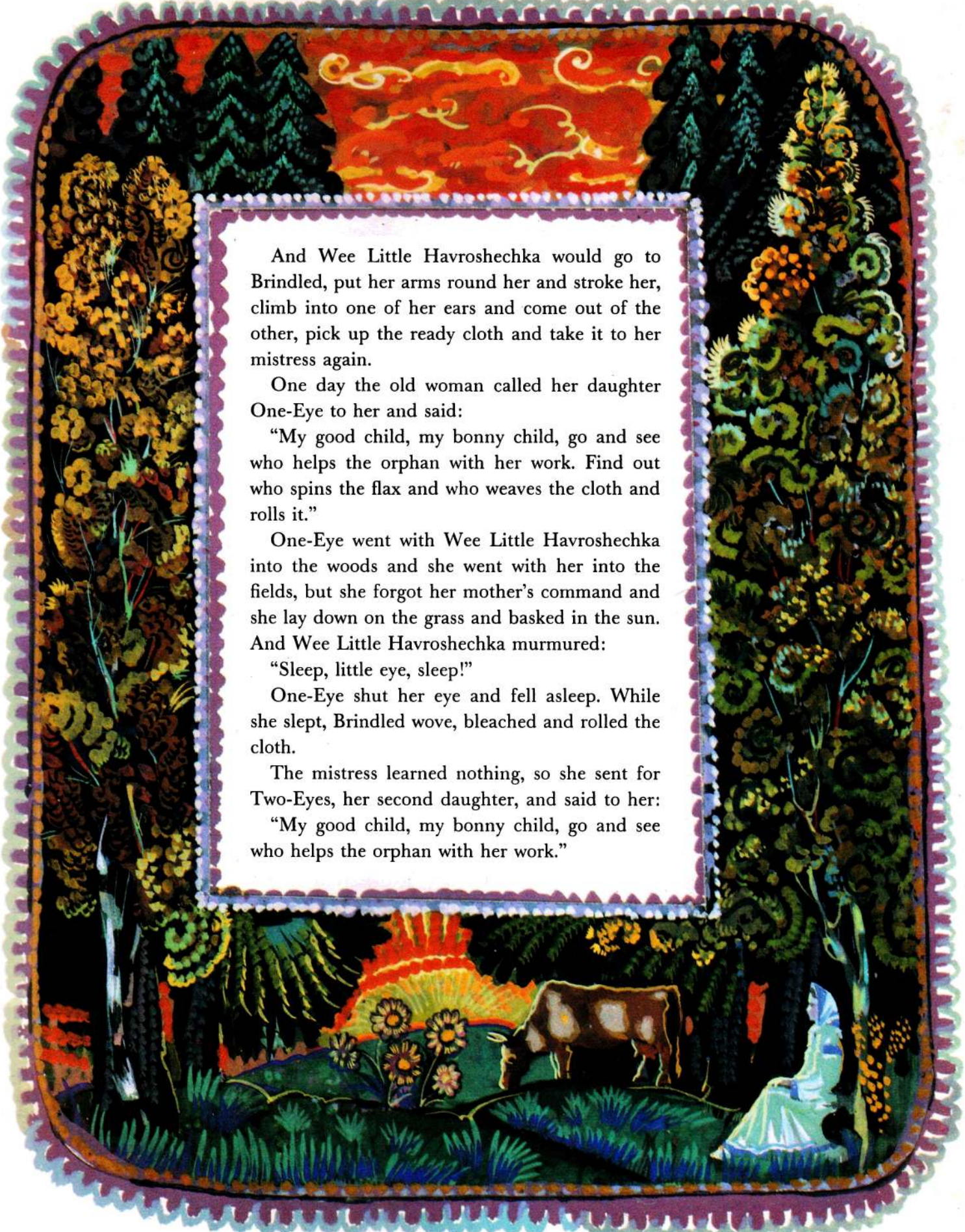
"Brindled, my dear," she would say. "They beat me and scold me, they don't give me enough to eat, and yet they forbid me to cry. I am to have five poods of flax spun, woven, bleached and rolled by tomorrow."

And the cow would say in reply:

"My bonny lass, you have only to climb into one of my ears and come out of the other, and your work will be done for you."

And just as Brindled said, so it was. Wee Little Havroshechka would climb into one of the cow's ears, and come out through the other. And lo and behold! – there lay the cloth, all woven and bleached and rolled.

Wee Little Havroshechka would then take the rolls of cloth to her mistress who would look at them and grunt and put them away in a chest and give Wee Little Havroshechka even more work to do.



And Wee Little Havroshechka would go to Brindled, put her arms round her and stroke her, climb into one of her ears and come out of the other, pick up the ready cloth and take it to her mistress again.

One day the old woman called her daughter One-Eye to her and said:

"My good child, my bonny child, go and see who helps the orphan with her work. Find out who spins the flax and who weaves the cloth and rolls it."

One-Eye went with Wee Little Havroshechka into the woods and she went with her into the fields, but she forgot her mother's command and she lay down on the grass and basked in the sun. And Wee Little Havroshechka murmured:

"Sleep, little eye, sleep!"

One-Eye shut her eye and fell asleep. While she slept, Brindled wove, bleached and rolled the cloth.

The mistress learned nothing, so she sent for Two-Eyes, her second daughter, and said to her:

"My good child, my bonny child, go and see who helps the orphan with her work."

The illustration is a vibrant, folk-art style scene. On the left, a traditional house with a dark roof and a small window is partially visible. A large, dark green tree with intricate, swirling patterns stands in front of it. A small figure in a white robe stands near the base of the tree. In the foreground, a person in a blue patterned coat is walking a brown cow with white spots along a path. The background is filled with stylized blue clouds and a dense border of various colorful flowers and plants. The entire scene is enclosed within a decorative, scalloped blue border.

Two-Eyes went with Wee Little Havro-shechka, but she forgot her mother's command and she lay down on the grass and basked in the sun. And Wee Little Havro-shechka murmured:

"Sleep, little eye! Sleep, the other little eye!"

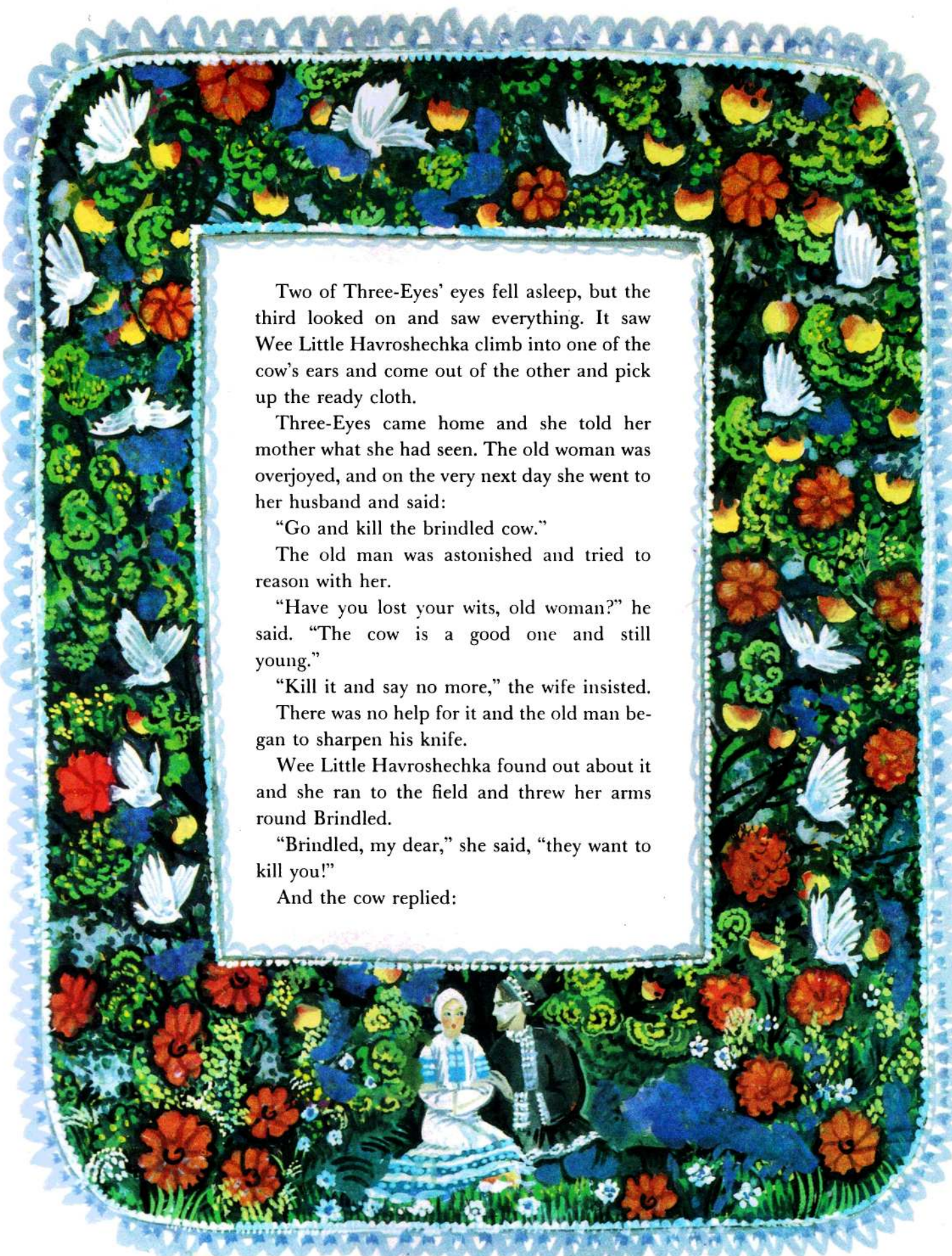
Two-Eyes shut her eyes and dozed off. While she slept, Brindled wove, bleached and rolled the cloth.

The old woman was very angry and on the third day she told Three-Eyes, her third daughter, to go with Wee Little Havro-shechka to whom she gave more work to do than ever.

Three-Eyes played and skipped about in the sun until she was so tired that she lay down on the grass. And Wee Little Havrosh-echka sang out:

"Sleep, little eye! Sleep, the other little eye!"

But she forgot all about the third little eye.



Two of Three-Eyes' eyes fell asleep, but the third looked on and saw everything. It saw Wee Little Havroshechka climb into one of the cow's ears and come out of the other and pick up the ready cloth.

Three-Eyes came home and she told her mother what she had seen. The old woman was overjoyed, and on the very next day she went to her husband and said:

"Go and kill the brindled cow."

The old man was astonished and tried to reason with her.

"Have you lost your wits, old woman?" he said. "The cow is a good one and still young."

"Kill it and say no more," the wife insisted.

There was no help for it and the old man began to sharpen his knife.

Wee Little Havroshechka found out about it and she ran to the field and threw her arms round Brindled.

"Brindled, my dear," she said, "they want to kill you!"

And the cow replied:



"Do not grieve, my bonny lass, and do what I tell you. Take my bones, tie them up in a kerchief, bury them in the garden and water them every day. Do not eat of my flesh and never forget me."

The old man killed the cow, and Wee Little Havroshechka did as Brindled had told her to. She went hungry, but she would not touch the meat, and she buried the bones in the garden and watered them every day.

After a while an apple-tree grew up out of them, and a wonderful tree it was! Its apples were round and juicy, its swaying boughs were of silver and its rustling leaves were of gold. Whoever drove by would stop to look and whoever came near marvelled.

A long time passed by and a little time, and one day One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes were out walking in the garden. And who should chance to be riding by at the time but a young man, handsome and curly-haired and strong and rich. When he saw the juicy apples he stopped and said to the girls teasingly:

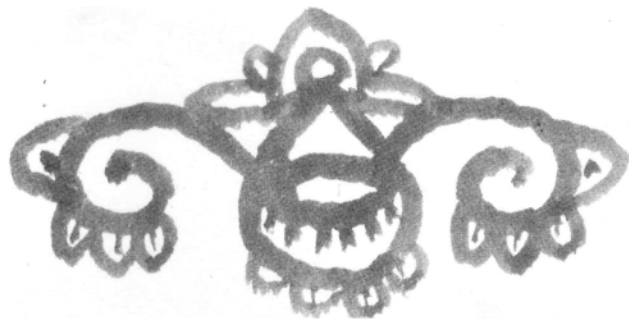
"Fair maidens! Her will I marry amongst you three who brings me an apple off yonder tree."

And off rushed the sisters to the apple-tree, each trying to get ahead of the others.

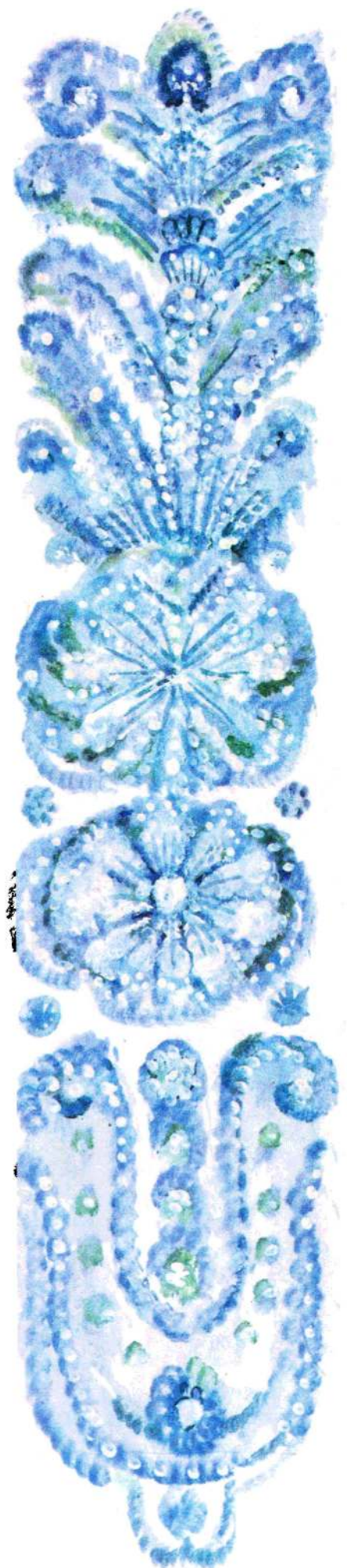
But the apples which had been hanging very low and seemed within easy reach, now swung up high in the air above the sisters' heads.

The sisters tried to knock them down, but the leaves came down in a shower and blinded them. They tried to pluck the apples off, but the boughs caught in their braids and unplaited them. Struggle and stretch as they would, they could not reach the apples and only scratched their hands.

Then Wee Little Havroshechka walked up to the tree, and at once the boughs bent down and the apples came into her hands. She gave an apple to the handsome young stranger, and they were married soon after. From that day on she knew no sorrow, but lived with her husband in health and cheer and grew richer from year to year.



FATHER FROST



Once upon a time there lived an old man with his second wife, and they each had a daughter. He had a daughter and so had she.

Everyone knows what stepmothers are like. If you do wrong, you get a beating, and if you do right, you get a beating all the same. Not so with the stepmother's own daughter: she is petted and praised for a good and clever lass no matter what she does.

The old man's daughter rose before daybreak to look after the cattle, bring firewood and water into the house, light the stove and sweep the floor. But her stepmother found fault with everything and fussed and scolded her all day long.

A wind howls loud and then it drops. But there is no quieting an old dame once she is roused. The stepmother made up her mind to do her stepdaughter to death.

"Take her away, old one," she said to her husband, "I can't bear the sight of her. Take her to the forest into the biting frost and leave her there."

The old man wept and sorrowed but he knew he could do nothing, for his wife always had her way. So he harnessed his horse and called to his daughter:

"Come, my sweet child, get into the sledge."

He took the homeless girl to the forest, dumped her into a snowdrift beneath a large fir-tree and drove away.

It was very cold, and the girl sat under the fir-tree





and shivered. Suddenly she heard Father Frost near by leaping from tree to tree and crackling and snapping among the twigs. In a twinkling he was on the top of the very tree beneath which she sat.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called.

"Yes, I'm very warm, Father Frost!" she answered.

Father Frost came down lower and he crackled and snapped louder than ever.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called again. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

The girl was scarcely able to fetch her breath, but she said:

"Yes, I'm very warm, Father Frost!"

Father Frost came down still lower, crackling and snapping very loudly indeed.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he asked. "Are you warm, my pretty one? Are you warm, my sweet one?"

The girl was growing numb and could hardly move her tongue, but still she said:

"I'm very warm, good Father Frost!"

And Father Frost took pity on the girl and he wrapped her up in his fluffy furs and downy quilts.

Meanwhile, the stepmother was baking pancakes and preparing for the funeral feast. Said she to her husband:

"Go to the forest, you old croaker, and bring back your daughter to be buried!"

The old man went to the forest and there, in the very spot where he had left her, sat his daughter, very gay and rosy. She was wrapped in a sable coat and clad in silver and gold. Beside her stood a large basket full of costly presents.

The old man was overjoyed. He seated his daughter in the sledge, put the basket in beside her and drove home.

Now the old woman was still baking the pancakes





when suddenly she heard her little dog under the table saying:

*Bow-wow! The old man's daughter comes a rich bride and
fair,
But the old woman's daughter, she will marry ne'er!*

The old woman threw a pancake to the dog and said:

"You speak wrong, dog! You must say:

*The old woman's daughter will be wooed and won,
But the old man's daughter is dead and gone!"*

The dog ate the pancake, but still it said:

*Bow-wow! The old man's daughter comes a rich bride and
fair,
But the old woman's daughter, she will marry ne'er!*

The old woman threw more pancakes to the dog and when this did not help she beat it, but still the dog said just what it had before.

All of a sudden the gate creaked, the door opened and in walked the old man's daughter, dazzling in her attire of silver and gold. Behind her came her father carrying a large and heavy basket full of costly gifts. The old woman looked and her hands dropped.

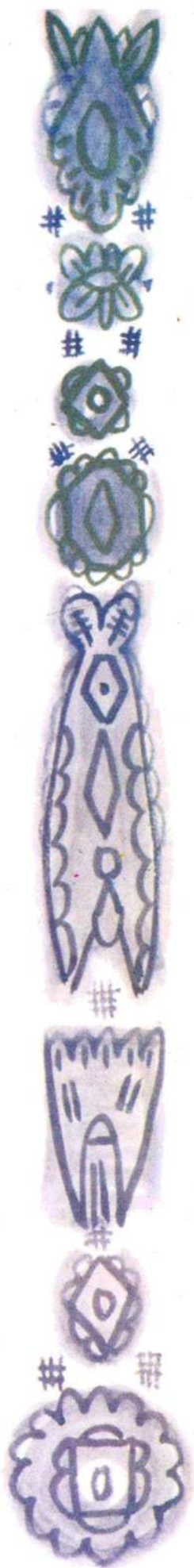
"Harness the horse, you 'old croaker!" said she to her husband. "Take my daughter to the forest and leave her in the same place as yours."

The old man put the old woman's daughter in the sledge, took her to the forest to the same place, dumped her into the snowdrift underneath the tall fir-tree and drove away.

There sat the old woman's daughter and she was so cold her teeth chattered.

By and by Father Frost came leaping from tree to tree, crackling and snapping among the twigs and stopping now and then to glance at the old woman's daughter.





"Are you warm, my lass?" he called.

Said she in reply:

"Oh, no, I'm terribly cold! Don't scrunch and crackle so, Frost!"

Father Frost came down lower, and he crackled and snapped the louder.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

"Oh, no," said she. "I'm numb all over! Go away, Frost!"

But Father Frost came down still lower and he crackled and snapped ever louder and his breath grew colder and colder.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called again. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

"Oh, no!" she cried. "I'm frozen! A plague on you, you old Frost! I hope the earth swallows you!"

Father Frost was so angered by these words that he gripped her with all his might and froze the old woman's daughter to death.

Day had barely dawned when the old woman said to her husband:

"Make haste and harness the horse, you old croaker. Go fetch my daughter and bring her back clad in silver and gold."

The old man drove away and the little dog under the table said:

*Bow-wow! The old man's daughter will soon be wed,
But the old woman's daughter is cold and dead!*

The old woman threw the dog a pie and said:

"You speak wrong, dog! You must say:

*The old woman's daughter comes a rich bride and fair,
But the old man's daughter, she will marry ne'er!*

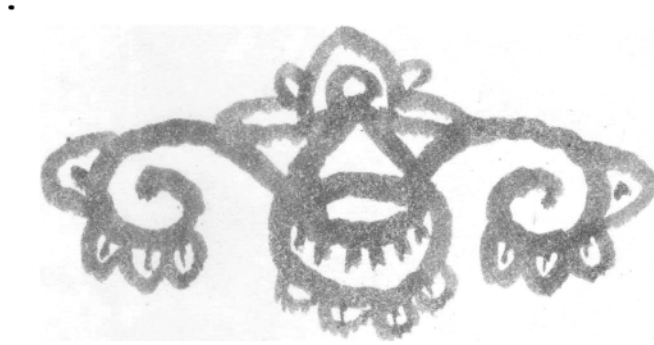
But the dog said just what it had before:

Bow-wow! The old woman's daughter is cold and dead!

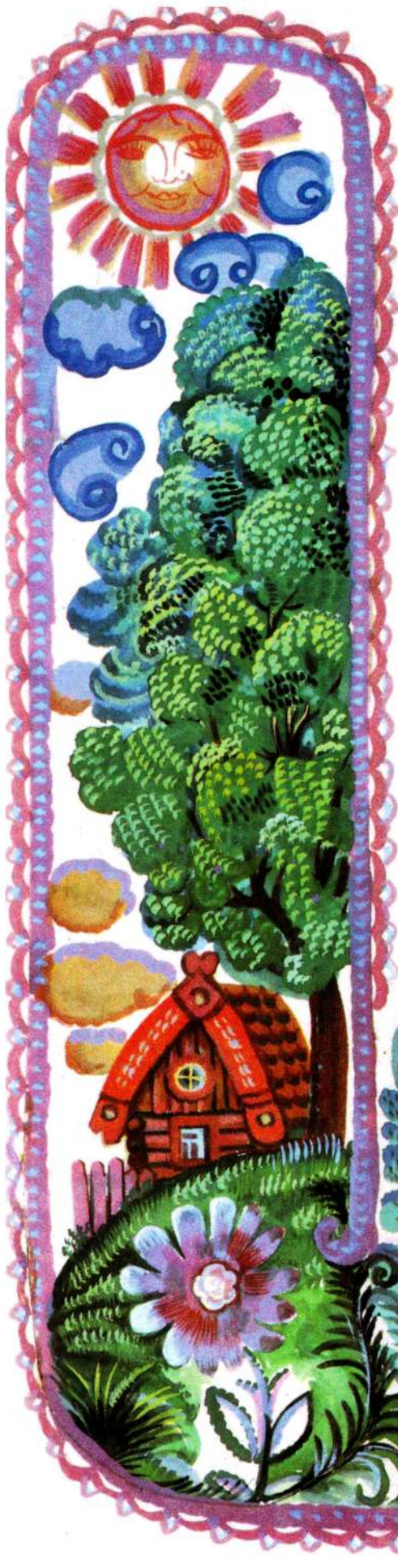


Just then the gate creaked and the old woman rushed out to meet her daughter. She turned back the bast cover and there lay her daughter in the sledge, dead.

The old woman broke out into loud weeping, but it was all too late.



LITTLE GIRL
AND THE SWAN-GEESE



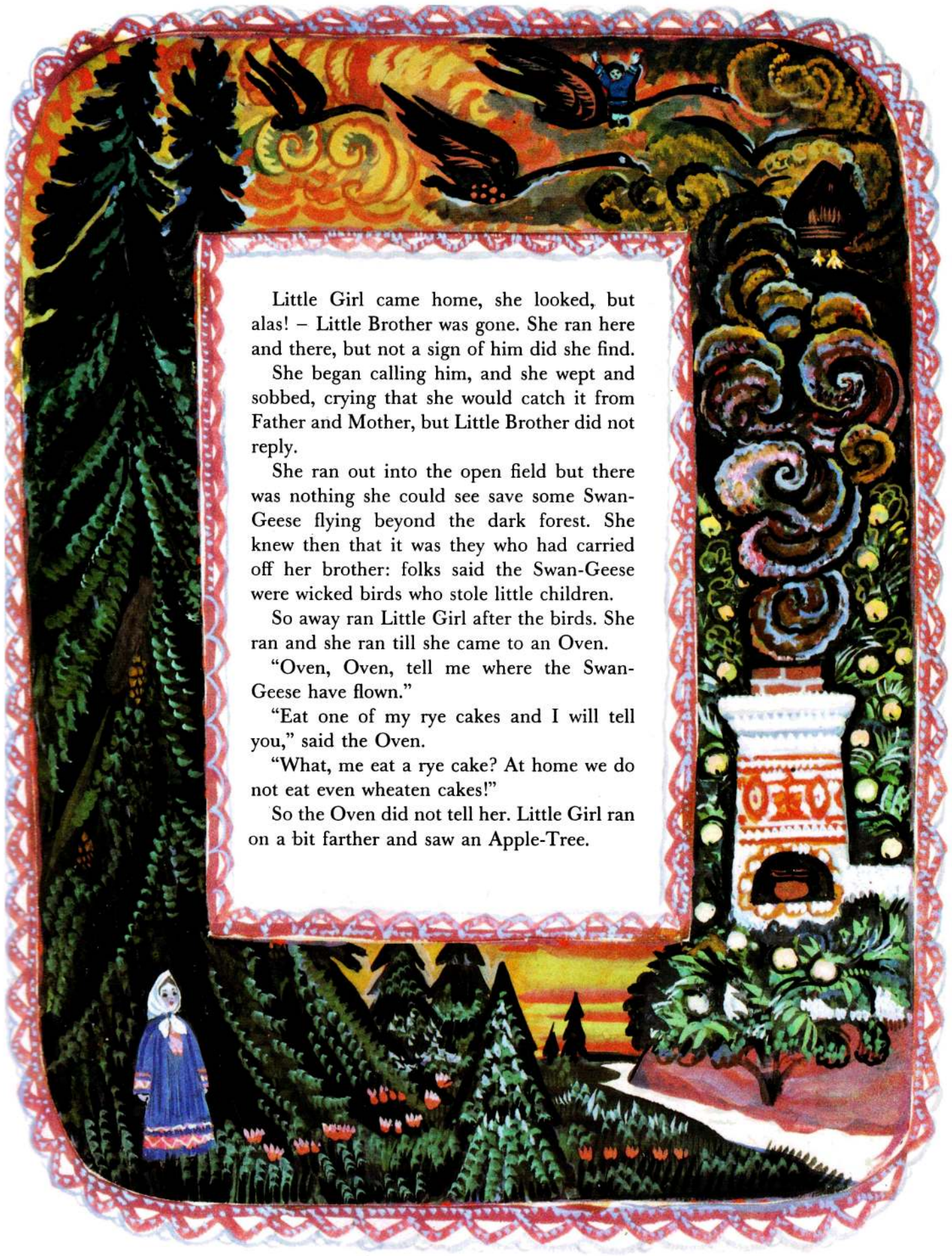
Once there was a peasant and his wife and they had a little girl and a little boy.

"Daughter," said Mother to her Little Girl, "we are going out to work, so look after your Little Brother. If you are a good girl and do not run out into the street we shall buy you a new kerchief."

Father and Mother went away, and Little Girl never stopped to think about what she had been told. She seated Little Brother on the grass under the window, ran out into the street and began to play with her friends, forgetting all about everything.

Suddenly a flock of Swan-Geese came flying up. They swooped down, caught up Little Brother and carried him off on their wings.



The illustration is a vibrant, folk-art style scene. In the center, a white rectangular text box is set against a background of a dark forest. To the left of the text box, a young girl in a blue dress with a white headscarf stands in a field of red flowers. To the right, a large, ornate white oven with red patterns and a black arched opening sits on a patch of ground. Above the oven, a tall, dark, spiral-shaped tree or structure is decorated with yellow and green ornaments. In the upper part of the scene, three swan-geese with black wings and white bodies are flying against a backdrop of swirling orange and yellow clouds. The entire scene is framed by a decorative, scalloped border with a red and white pattern.

Little Girl came home, she looked, but alas! – Little Brother was gone. She ran here and there, but not a sign of him did she find.

She began calling him, and she wept and sobbed, crying that she would catch it from Father and Mother, but Little Brother did not reply.

She ran out into the open field but there was nothing she could see save some Swan-Geese flying beyond the dark forest. She knew then that it was they who had carried off her brother: folks said the Swan-Geese were wicked birds who stole little children.

So away ran Little Girl after the birds. She ran and she ran till she came to an Oven.

“Oven, Oven, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown.”

“Eat one of my rye cakes and I will tell you,” said the Oven.

“What, me eat a rye cake? At home we do not eat even wheaten cakes!”

So the Oven did not tell her. Little Girl ran on a bit farther and saw an Apple-Tree.



"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown."

"Eat one of my wild apples and I will tell you," said the Tree.

"At home we do not eat even garden apples!"

So the Apple-Tree did not tell her. Little Girl ran on till she came to Milk River with Jelly Banks.

"Milk River with Jelly Banks, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown."

"Have some of my jelly with milk and I will tell you."

"At home we do not eat even jelly with cream."

So Milk River did not tell her.

Little Girl ran about the fields and woods for a long, long time. And now day was giving way to evening, and there was nothing for her to do but go home. All at once, what should she see but a hut on hen's feet, very tidy and neat, turning round and round without a sound.

The hut had one window, and inside the



hut sat Baba-Yaga, the witch, spinning tow.
And on the bench sat Little Brother playing
with silver apples.

Little Girl went in.

"Good evening, Granny!"

"Good evening, lass. What brings you
here?"

"In the fields and woods have I walked all
day, over marshes and swamps have I made
my way. My frock is wet through, so I've
come to you to get warm."

"Sit down then and spin some tow."

Baba-Yaga gave Little Girl the spindle and
herself went out. And Little Girl sat there
spinning when all of a sudden a Mouse ran
out from under the stove and said to her:

"Lassie, lassie, give me some porridge and I
will tell you something."

Little Girl gave it some porridge, and
Mouse said:

"Baba-Yaga has gone to light a fire in the
bathhouse. She will steam you and wash you,
roast you in the oven and eat you up, and
then roll around on your bones."

Little Girl sat there more dead than alive, and she wept and sobbed, but Mouse went on:

"Make haste, take Little Brother and run away, and I will spin the tow for you."

So Little Girl took Little Brother in her arms and ran off. Baba-Yaga came up to the window every once in a while and asked:

"Are you spinning, lass?"

And Mouse would answer: "Yes, I am, Granny."

Baba-Yaga made a fire in the bathhouse and came for Little Girl. But the hut was empty.

Baba-Yaga cried: "Off you go, Swan-Geese, fly and catch them! Little Girl has carried off Little Brother!"

Little Girl ran until she came to Milk River, and what should she see but the Swan-Geese coming after her and Little Brother.

"Milk River, Milk River, hide me, do!" cried Little Girl.

"Eat some of my plain fruit jelly."

Little Girl ate some and said thank you. So Milk River hid her and her brother in the shadow of its Fruit-Jelly Banks.

And the Swan-Geese never saw them and flew past.

Little Girl ran on again. But the Swan-Geese turned back and flew straight towards her. At any moment they might see her.

What was Little Girl to do? On she ran and she came across the Apple-Tree.

"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, hide me, do!"

"Eat my wild apples."

Little Girl ate one quickly and said thank you, and the Apple-Tree hid her and Little Brother among its leaves and branches.

The Swan-Geese never saw them and flew past.

Little Girl picked up her brother and ran on again. She ran and she ran and she had almost reached home when the Swan-Geese caught sight of her. They honked and flapped their wings, and in another minute would have torn Little Brother out of her arms.

Little Girl ran up to the Oven.

"Oven, Oven, hide me, do!"

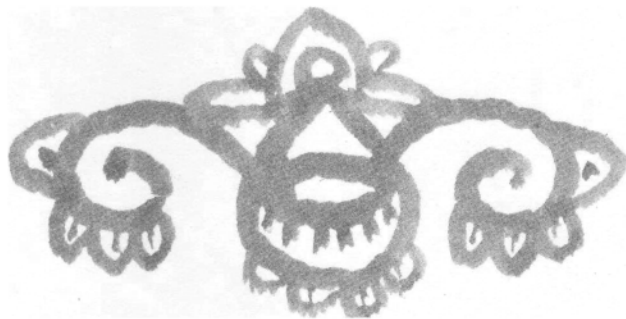
"Eat one of my rye cakes."

Little Girl popped a piece of cake into her mouth and herself crawled into the Oven with her brother.

The Swan-Geese flew round and round screaming and honking, but after a while they gave it up and flew back to Baba-Yaga.

Little Girl said thank you to the Oven and ran home with her brother.

And before long Father and Mother came home too.



THE TSAR OF THE SEAS
AND ELENA THE WISE



In a certain tsardom, in a certain realm there lived a Tsar, a good and a merciful man, and his young wife. The couple had no children and this made them very unhappy.

One day the Tsar went out hunting. He roamed the forest for a long time, he went far and he went near, shooting birds and slaying deer, and at last he was spent and weary and very, very thirsty. He looked round for water, but there was none to be had: the brooks were dry and the springs hidden from sight under heaps of fallen leaves and twigs. All of a sudden he came out onto a small glade, and what did he see there but a little round lake with water as clear as crystal and as cold as ice. The Tsar had no cup or dipper with him, so down he lay on the ground and began drinking straight from the lake. The water filled him with strength, but when he had drunk his fill and wanted to get up, he found that he could not, for someone was holding him fast by his beard and not letting him lift his head. The Tsar pulled himself this way and that, he fought and threshed about on the ground, but he could not break free.

"Who is it that is holding me?" the Tsar called out. "Let me go, I beg of you!"

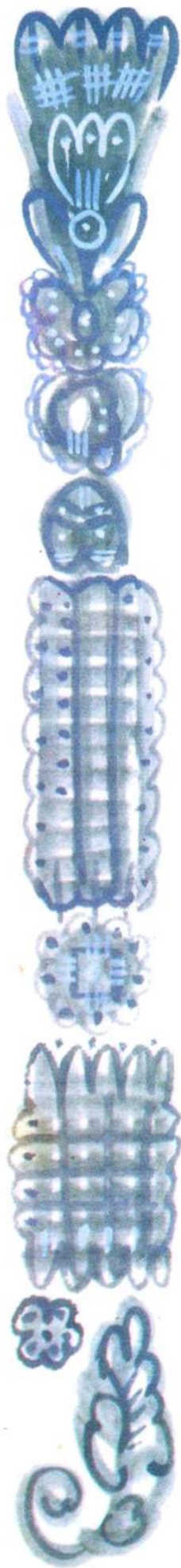
The water in the lake reared up in waves, and a loud and fearful voice that came from under them replied:

"I will let you go, O Tsar, you who are good and merciful, I will let you go if you promise to give me that which you have in your house but know naught about."

"There is nothing in my house I know naught about," thought the Tsar. "There is not a nail there that I have not driven into the wall with my own two hands!"

And he promised the Merciless Tsar of the Seas, for it was he who was clutching him by the beard, that upon the passage of fifteen years he would give him





So he stole up quietly and carried off the speckled wings.

The maids came out of the water, they stuck on their wings and pulled on their feathers, and, turning into doves, took wing and flew away.

But one among them was left behind. She stood on the shore, and wept bitter tears, and then she wiped them away with her golden plait and began looking for her speckled wings. She looked for them here, and she looked for them there, and she called in a sad little voice:

"Answer me, you who took my wings, speak and tell me who you are! If an old man you are, I will call you father, if an old dame you are, I will call you mother, if a young man you are, I will call you my own dear husband!"

At this Tsarevich Ivan stepped out from behind the tree.

"Here are your wings, fair maid!" he said.

"Thank you, brave lad!" the maid replied. "And now speak and tell me who you are and whither you are bound."

"I am Tsarevich Ivan, the son of a tsar, and I am on my way to see your father, the Merciless Tsar of the Seas."

"And I am Elena the Wise, my merciless father's favourite daughter, and I shall do my best to help you in your trouble."

Off the two of them set together, and by and by they came to a watery realm, the tsardom of the seas. Stuck into the ground by the palace gate and forming its wall were forty sharp pikes, each save one of them crowned with a warrior's head.

"It is your head that is meant to crown the fortieth pike, Tsarevich Ivan," said Elena the Wise. "But never fear, for I will see to it that you come to no harm."

Tsarevich Ivan came into the palace, and there before him, seated on a throne, was the Merciless Tsar of the Seas with a golden crown on his head. All about him were crabs and crawfish and pikes and sawfish. Some had flippers, some had claws, some had teeth as sharp as saws. Some of them stared and others snapped, and others still their fins they flapped. Some of them flitted to and fro, and others lay still on the sands below. A huge lobster caught Tsarevich Ivan by the shoulder with his claw, and a fish that was even bigger than the lobster twined one of its long whiskers round his legs.

"How dared you make me wait for fifteen long years?" roared the Tsar of the Seas in thunderous tones. "There's a great lot of work that waits to be done, and you shall have one night in which to do it all! So go now and look to it that by daybreak you shall have cut down that thick forest yonder, ploughed the soil, sowed and reaped the wheat, ground the grain into flour, baked the pies and brought them to me. For if you don't do it your head will crown the last of the forty pikes that make up my palace wall!"

Away went Tsarevich Ivan from the palace, and his steps were slow and his head hung low as he walked.

Elena the Wise saw him and asked:

"Why so troubled, Tsarevich Ivan? Why do you look so sad? Why do you hang your head?"

"What can I say to you, fair one! You cannot help me in my trouble nor save me from death."

"Who knows! Perhaps I can."





So then Tsarevich Ivan told her of the task that the Merciless Tsar of the Seas had set him.

"That is a mere trifle, there are harder things to come!" said Elena the Wise. "So say your prayers and go to bed, and face the morrow 'thout fear or dread, for night is the mother of wisdom."

Tsarevich Ivan went to bed, and on the stroke of midnight Elena the Wise stepped out onto the porch, and a beautiful porch it was, waved her kerchief and called out in a loud voice:

"Hear me, kind folk, hear me, O skilled and clever workmen! Come at my call as fast as you can and serve me as you once served my mother!"

At this huge numbers of workmen came running. They began uprooting the trees with the greatest ease, and sowing the wheat and mixing the dough, and baking the pies, ten in a row. By daybreak everything was done, and Tsarevich Ivan took the pies to the Merciless Tsar of the Seas.

Seeing him, the Tsar flew into a temper and roared in a terrible voice:

"Not you it was that thought this up, not you it was that did the work – someone wiser than you dares jest with me. Very well, then, I'll set you another task. You are to breed a great many bees, to collect the wax and then to build a church out of it, and you are to do it all in the space of one night!"

Off went Tsarevich Ivan, and his steps were slow and his head hung low. He came home and told Elena the Wise of the straits he was in, and Elena the Wise said:

"That is a mere trifle, there are harder things to come, Tsarevich Ivan! So go to bed and have a sleep, for night is the mother of wisdom."

Tsarevich Ivan did as she told him, and on the stroke of midnight Elena the Wise came out onto her porch, and a beautiful porch it was, and waved her crimson kerchief.

"Hear me, O bees!" she cried. "Come flying here from far and near, build me a church of wax and see to it that it is ready before morning!"

At this huge numbers of bees came flying up and buzzing for all they were worth in their thin little voices. Each brought along a piece of the finest wax, and by daybreak the church of wax was built and ready.

The Tsar of the Seas looked and grew livid with rage.

"You are not wise or skilled enough to have done what yon have done by yourself, Tsarevich Ivan!" roared he. "Someone who got his learning from me is behind this. Come dusk, you will go to yon green meadow, catch a wild, unbroken horse there, mount him and bring him to me. Once you have done that, I will set you free."

Tsarevich Ivan was overjoyed. Off he went, whistling gaily, and Elena the Wise saw him and asked:

"What task has the Tsar set you today, Tsarevich Ivan?"

"It is no real task but a mere trifle!" Tsarevich Ivan replied. "I am to catch a wild horse and to bring him to the palace."

Elena the Wise sighed and looked sad.

"How can you be so foolish, Tsarevich Ivan!" said she. "This task the Tsar has set you is one to be feared. The wild horse he has spoken of is he himself, the Merciless Tsar of the Seas. Now what am I, unhappy maid that I am, to do? Am I to let my promised husband die or am I to side with him and so betray my own father?"





At this Tsarevich Ivan began pleading with her to side with him.

"Very well, I shall help you this time too!" said Elena the Wise at last. "Only we shall not be able to remain here afterwards, we shall have to make our way to your realm."

She gave him three rods, one of copper, one of pewter, and one of silver, and then she said:

"You must come up to the horse from the left-hand side, for my father is blind in his left eye. Jump up onto his neck, hold on to his silver mane and beat him with the copper rod, and mind, keep your eyes raised to the sky all the while and never look down. When the copper rod breaks, beat him with the pewter rod, and when the pewter rod breaks, with the silver one. Beat him hard and mercilessly, till the flesh comes off his ribs."

Off made Tsarevich Ivan for the green meadow, and what did he see there but a wild horse pounding the ground with his hoof. Smoke poured from the horse's nose, flame streamed from his mouth, and the horse looked about him with his right eye and took in the whole of the meadow.

Tsarevich Ivan came up to him from the left-hand side and leapt straight onto his neck. He clutched the horse by his silver mane, and he struck at his sides with the copper rod.

Up to the sky the horse reared, to the black clouds he soared, and he carried Tsarevich Ivan over the deep sea.

"Look down, look down!" he cried.

But Tsarevich Ivan raised his eyes to the sky and kept them so and never once looked down. And all the while he kept hitting the horse's sides very hard indeed. The copper rod was broken, and the pewter rod was all worn, and now he took up the silver rod and struck him with that.

The horse bore him here and he bore him there, and at last the flesh came off his ribs, and so weary and spent was he that he swayed from side to side and foam dripped from his mouth. So then he flung Tsarevich Ivan down onto the green meadow and vanished.

Tsarevich Ivan went to see Elena the Wise.

"Neither you nor I can expect mercy now, Tsarevich Ivan," said Elena the Wise. "We must leave the Tsardom of the Seas as fast as we can and flee from my father's displeasure."

She took a sharp knife, made a small cut with it on the little finger of her right hand and let three drops of blood fall onto the stove. Then she locked the door of her chamber, brought out two horses, two black stallions, and away went she and Tsarevich Ivan as fast as the wind!

There sat the Merciless Tsar of the Seas on his throne, a golden crown on his head and his arms and legs bound with a kerchief, and his head ached and so did his whole body. He sent a servant to fetch Elena the Wise, and the servant knocked at her door and then knocked some more, and one of the three drops of blood on the stove said in the voice of Elena the Wise:

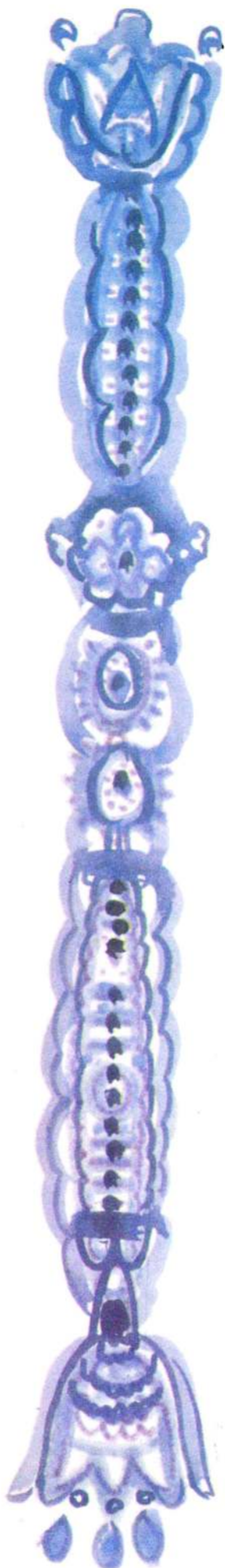
"I'm coming! I just have to put on my gown."

An hour went by, and Elena the Wise did not appear. So the Tsar sent a second servant to fetch her. The servant knocked at her door and then knocked some more, and the second drop of blood spoke and said:

"I'm coming! I just have to put on my crown."

A second hour went by, and still Elena the Wise did not appear. So the





Tsar went to fetch her himself. He knocked at her door and then knocked some more, and called out:

"Why don't you come, Elena the Wise? Why don't you obey your father, you stubborn maid?"

And the third drop of blood spoke and said:

"I'm coming! I just have to put on my necklace."

But the Tsar roared out in angry tones:

"That is not her voice, it's not she who speaks!"

He broke down the door, and lo! – there was no one there.

The Tsar was fit to burst he was so angry, and he sent out his men to seize and bring back Elena the Wise and Tsarevich Ivan.

Across an open field galloped the runaways, and by and by Elena the Wise reined in her horse and said:

"Come, Tsarevich Ivan, lie down on the ground and see if you can hear any voice or sound."

Tsarevich Ivan fell flat on the ground, put his ear to it and listened with bated breath.

"There's silence ahead of us and a great noise behind us. I can hear horses neighing," said he.

"Those are my father's men coming after us."

And Elena the Wise turned herself into a vegetable garden and Tsarevich Ivan into a head of cabbage.

The Tsar's men rode only as far as the vegetable garden and then turned back again.

"There is nothing in the field, Your Majesty," said they to the Tsar. "Nothing but a vegetable garden with only one head of cabbage growing in it."

"You noodleheads you! Go and fetch me that head of cabbage. Someone who got his learning from me had a hand in this!"

On rode Elena the Wise and Tsarevich Ivan, and by and by Elena the Wise reined in her horse and said:

"Lie down on the ground, Tsarevich Ivan, and see if you can hear any voice or sound!"

Tsarevich Ivan fell flat on the ground, put his ear to it and listened.

"There is silence ahead of us and a great noise behind us," he said.

"Those are my father's men, and they're getting close."

And Elena the Wise turned herself into a well and Tsarevich Ivan into a falcon. There sat the falcon on the edge of the well and drank the crystal-clear water.

The Tsar's servants rode up to the well, they saw no footprints farther ahead and no people, either, in the open field, and turned back again.

"There is nothing to be seen in the open field, Your Majesty," said they to the Tsar. "All we saw was a well and a falcon drinking from it."

"You noodleheads you! That was my daughter up to one of her tricks. She got her learning from me and is now trying to outwit me. I shall have to measure my strength against hers, I see."

And away rode the Merciless Tsar of the Seas in pursuit of Elena the Wise and Tsarevich Ivan.

Across an open field the runaways galloped, across a green meadow they rode, and by and by Elena the Wise reined in her horse.





"I think I shall put my ear to the ground and listen myself now," said she. "I may well hear something."

And she threw herself down on the ground and put her ear to it.

"Hoofs are pounding, metal is clanging!" said she. "That is my father riding after us."

On the two of them rode again as fast as they could, but the Merciless Tsar of the Seas rode after them and was close at their heels.

"Not all is lost yet," said Elena the Wise. "I know how we can protect ourselves from the Tsar of the Seas."

She threw a brush over her shoulder, and lo! – there behind her a forest appeared, so dense that there was no room to thrust in one's hand between the trees and so huge that one could not have gone round it if one walked for three years. The Tsar of the Seas began chewing through the trees, and by and by he cleared a narrow path for himself and was out of the forest and riding after the runaways again.

He was getting close and about to catch up with them, but Elena the Wise threw a comb over her shoulder, and lo! – a tall mountain appeared behind her, and there was no way of getting past it on foot or on horseback.

The Tsar of the Seas set to and began to dig away at the ground. He dug and he dug till he had made a narrow passage for himself just under the mountain, and he went along it and was soon riding after the runaways again. He was close at their heels and about to seize them, but Elena the Wise waved her towel, and lo! – there behind her a huge sea appeared. The Tsar galloped up to the sea, and, seeing that there was no way of getting across it, gave up and turned his way homewards.

Tsarevich Ivan and Elena the Wise reached his father's realm, and Tsarevich Ivan said:

"I shall go on ahead and you must wait for me here. I shall send a coach for you presently."

"Mind that you do not kiss anyone on his right cheek or else you'll forget me," said Elena the Wise.

"I won't, never you fear!"

He came home and, oh, how glad his family were to see him! He kissed and embraced them all, but was careful not to kiss anyone on his right cheek. But when he found himself in his mother's embrace the promise he had made slipped his mind. He kissed her on both cheeks and at once forgot all about Elena the Wise.

And Elena the Wise, poor, unhappy maid that she was, stood where he had left her and waited for him. She waited a long time, but Tsarevich Ivan did not come, and at last she went into town and hired herself out as a maidservant to a poor old woman.

Time passed, and Tsarevich Ivan decided to get married. He found himself a wife and held a great feast to celebrate his wedding. Elena the Wise learnt about it and she went into the courtyard of the Tsar's palace and up to the kitchen. Now, just before then the Tsarina had let the wedding cake burn, and she stood there crying. Elena the Wise came up to her and bowed low.

"Allow me to bake you another cake, O Tsarina our mother," said she.

There was nothing else the Tsarina could do, so she gave Elena the Wise all that was needed to bake a cake, and in just one hour the cake was ready.



The Tsarina thanked Elena the Wise and gave her a little money, and Elena the Wise said:
“Do let me stand by the palace door, O Tsarina our mother, and watch the guests feasting.”
“Go ahead!” said Tsarina.

The guests drank the health of the bride and groom, and then the bride took a knife and began cutting the wedding cake, and lo! – out of the cake flew two doves: a he-dove and a she-dove.

“Kiss me!” said the he-dove to his mate.

“Oh no!” she replied. “I will kiss you, and you will forget me as Tsarevich Ivan forgot Elena the Wise.”

The he-dove looked sad.

“Kiss me!” said he again.

“On no!” his mate replied. “I will kiss you and love you dearly, and you will forget me as Tsarevich Ivan forgot Elena the Wise.”

Tsarevich Ivan heard her and remembered Elena the Wise.

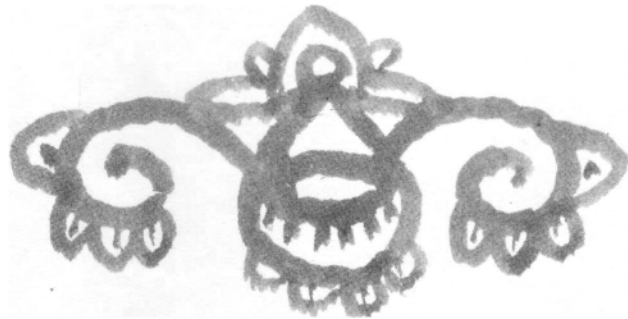
He looked round the chamber and he saw her standing by the door. Up he jumped from his seat, took Elena the Wise by her snow-white hands and led her up to his mother and father.

“This is Elena the Wise, my true wife,” said he. “She it was who saved me and got me out of trouble.”

“I am glad you have won for yourself such a wife as that, my son,” said the Tsar. “May both of you know honour and fame and have a long and happy life together.”

A tsar need waste no time brewing the beer or boiling the mead, for it’s all there ready and waiting for him, so a new wedding feast was now held, and Tsarevich Ivan and Elena the Wise were married.

They lived together long and happily, they knew no woe, shed never a tear, and prospered the more from year to year.



Request to Readers

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